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PlayStation2 | GameCube | Xbox | PC | GBA | PSP | DS | Arcade | Retro



PREVIEWED

ODDWORLD: STRANGER [PS2/XB] METROID PRIME 2 [GC] BATTLEFIELD 2 [PC] SHADOW OF ROME [PS2]
PAPER MARIO 2 [GC] DESTROY ALL HUMANS! [XB] GUILD WARS [PC] KILLZONE [PS2]


eMag

'Rockstar is as Rockstar does' – a phrase that's spilled from our lips more than a few times in the weeks approaching our deadline. Highly secretive and, quite rightly, painfully protective of its products, the publisher/developer likes to do things differently, preferring, some might say, to live up to its name – often with frustrating consequences.

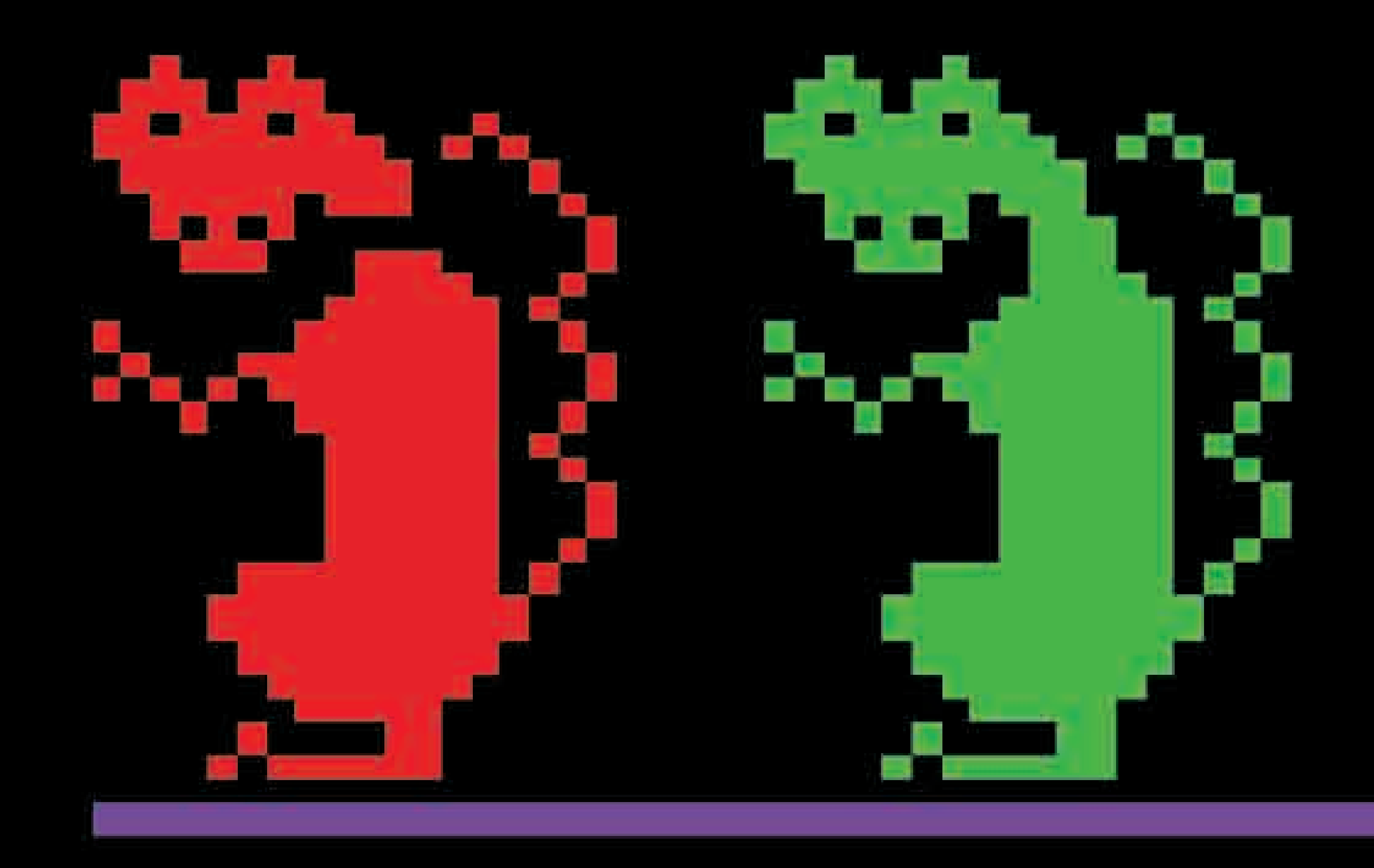
Friend of controversy, enemy of the *Daily Mail*, Rockstar has clearly realised that the hype that surrounds its games means it's never far from the public eye, even though its release rate is rather slow.

Though for much of this year *Manhunt* has been the focus of media attention, the release of *GTA: San Andreas* will no doubt shift our gaze from one Rockstar product to another. But for those of us mature enough to play adult-themed games without dire consequences, the only question we have of *San Andreas* is whether it can maintain the impossibly high standards of its predecessors. From what we've seen, the answer is a resounding 'yes', and, once again, the hype and secrecy is duly warranted.



Simon Phillips, Group Editor



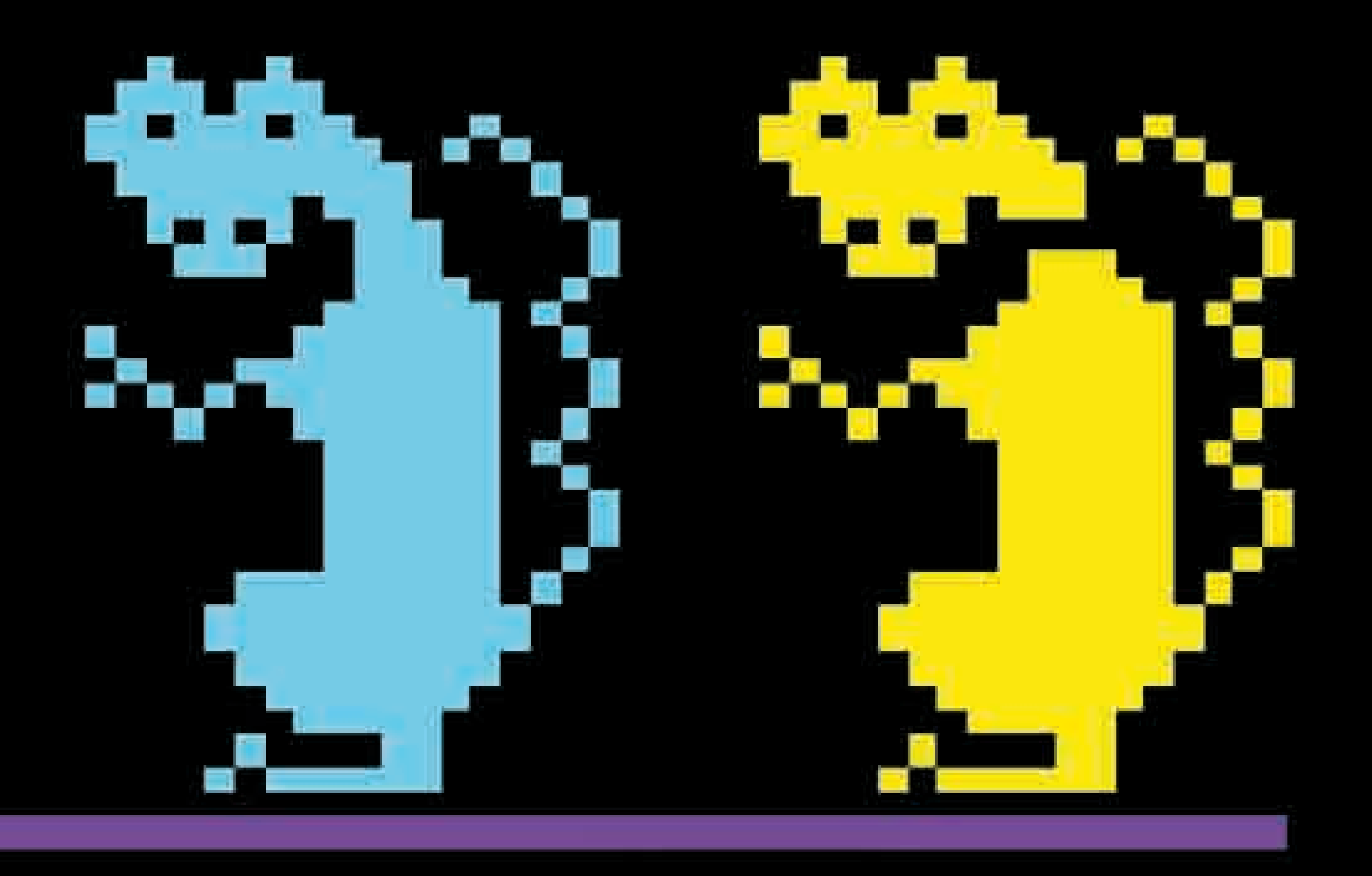


The red dragon loves

The green dragon some

The blue dragon somet

The yellow dragon onl



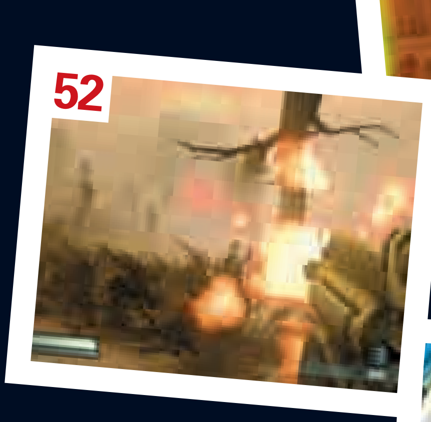
reading games tm.

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Kidnapped cattle, alien body-snatching, planetary conquest… will the madness of Pandemic's invasion adventure ever end?

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UK GAMES MARKET DOUBLES IN SIZE IN SIX YEARS

WELCOME TO BOOM TOWN



Two reports compiled by market research company Screen Digest have revealed massive growth in the UK videogames market.

Commissioned by publisher body Elspa, the reports reveal the UK games market has grown by over one hundred per cent in the last six years, compared to 30 per cent growth in cinema box office sales, 14 per cent growth in VHS and DVD rentals, and 4.5 per cent reduction in music sales. The only other market to show such a high rate of growth was VHS and DVD retail sales, which grew by 165 per cent – although as the DVD market barely existed pre-1997, its high growth figure is skewed by its introduction into the mainstream.

The high growth means the UK games market holds its position as the third largest world market behind the US and Japan. Amazingly, the UK's game market is larger than that of France and Germany combined. When asked why this is the case, Michael Rawlinson, deputy director general of Elspa, said, "The UK has a very positive view of videogaming [and its] console market is far more advanced than either France or Germany… the genres and gameplay offered particularly suit British tastes and preferences."

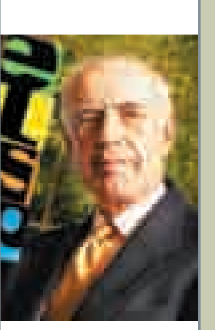
In 2003, the UK videogames market for hardware and software (excluding PCs) was worth over £2 billion. Looking beyond just the UK, the global games market is said to now be worth $18.2 billion, a 10.8 percent rise from 2002. Despite this considerable rise, the reports predict even more growth in the future, envisioning a global market worth £21.2 billion by the end of 2007.

As well as the expected roll-out of new home hardware, the industry is looking to the new handhelds to push gaming further. "The introduction of new handheld machines – like Nokia N-Gage, Nintendo DS and Sony PSP – will give the market a boost ahead of the next generation of TV-based consoles," said Ben Keen, chief analyst for Screen Digest.

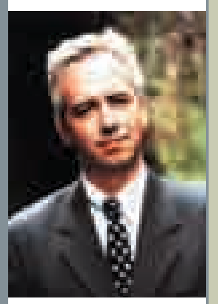
There's little doubt these reports signify growing acceptance of games as mainstream entertainment. The stigma surrounding games and the assumption they're for children or socially inept men is crumbling away to reveal a more hip image, pioneered by Sony and its expertly orchestrated PlayStation brand.

The popularity of interactive games has also boosted sales, and shops have noticed this new trend. Lisa Artemis, PR executive for Game, explained that "Dancing, singing and party games such as *Dance:UK* and *EyeToy* are hugely popular to a wide variety of customers, and we're selling more than ever."

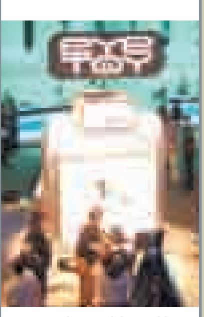
"The new emphasis [is] on games with a mass market appeal," confirmed Keen. The question is, how will this shift in trend affect gameplay?



Bennett: Strong sales prove popularity.



Keen: Music industry needs new ideas.



Interactivity: making gaming mainstream.

GROWING UP

AFTER LAST MONTH'S CRITICISM, HAS THE GAMES INDUSTRY PROVED ITSELF?

TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGIN'

Elspa director general Roger Bennett – one of the industry's most loyal championing voices – was quick to air his views on the findings in these reports. "The computer and videogames industry continues to demonstrate the most dynamic growth rate of all the creative industries," he said. "As both central and local government recognise the value of this industry to the UK balance of trade, it is gratifying to have proof of the ever growing popularity of interactive entertainment and the broadening customer base." And it surely must be 'gratifying' for Bennett in particular to be given the opportunity to say these things, considering he's spent the last month or so continually defending the videogame industry from those sections of the mainstream press wanting to blame it for society's ills.

MUSIC TO OUR EARS

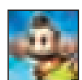
Being relatively new compared to the music and film industries, and only recently gaining mass acceptance as a valuable and socially acceptable entertainment medium, it's unsurprising the UK games market has seen such large growth. What does raise eyebrows, however, is how pitifully the music industry has fared. In the same period the videogames market rose 100 per cent, the music industry dropped 4.5 per cent in a period where technology is cheaper than ever before and CD players are finding their way into more houses. While the music industry is quick to blame file sharing for its woes, Ben Keen, chief analyst for Screen Digest, has a different idea of why the music industry is faltering: "It's because of the failure of the industry to develop effective business models that exploit consumer interest in music," he says. "Surging attendance at live music events demonstrates the interest and demand that is out there."

OUR TWO CENTS

While we're happy to see proof that gaming is growing into a more widespread activity, it's worth thinking about what this means for the future of our beloved pastime. Sources are suggesting the expanding audience is due to the more social and interactive games sweeping through game stores, and while we're all for welcoming new faces to the videogame fold, we just hope the industry remembers its roots. Though we're as keen as the next person to drunkenly jump about like a loon with *EyeToy: Play* and croon achingly to *SingStar*, we consider games played with a joypad to be of far more value. We fear the day when consoles have cameras built into them and 50 per cent of games try to introduce interactive elements. But regardless of our concerns, this market growth can only be a good thing for gaming culture as a whole and shows critics that games are an increasingly important part of today's entertainment media. Since 1995, over 25 million consoles have been sold in the UK – that's one for every household. The numbers speak for themselves.

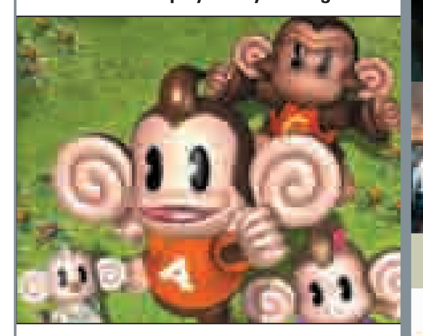


BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



MO' MONKEY, MO' PROBLEMS

It looks as though the days of the single-format simian are over. *Super Monkey Ball Deluxe* will be winging its way to both PS2 and Xbox, pulling together the best stages from both existing GameCube titles as well as a host of new ones. Naturally, it wouldn't be *Monkey Ball* without the mini-games and all of these will make the console jump as well. We're still unsure about how well the games will control without the eight directional indents of the Cube's analogue stick but the possibility of online play is very exciting.

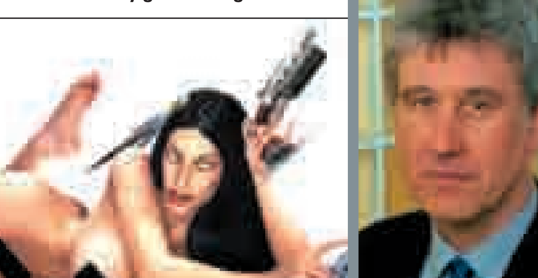




BLOOD WILL SELL

Top-shelf stalwart *Playboy* is running an unusual feature in this month's issue, showcasing polygonal nudity in a bid to highlight the fact that gaming is moving in some very odd directions. Star attractions are *Bloodrayne*'s lead vixen, Tala from Sammy's *Darkwatch* and *Leisure Suit Larry*'s Luba Licious, all of whom are revealing more than we ever wanted to see. We can't help noticing that the ladies baring the most virtual skin have games due soon that don't look very good. Go figure.







EGN proved popular with trade and industry types.

Game Stars Live got the support of the public.

ELSPA REJOICES, BUT AT WHAT COST TO THE FUTURE OF UK SHOWS?

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Between the squabbles and name calling, the lead up to last month's simultaneous running of CMP's European Computer Trade Show and Elspa's European Games Network and Game Stars Live events was anything but civil. With all the shows now over, though, the industry has had time to reflect on the divisions caused by the overlapping events, and while there's been some cause for celebration, the mood has turned to one of caution rather than satisfaction.

It was Game Stars Live that managed to capture much of the attention, attracting over 50,000 visitors in five days, although this final figure still fell short of the number anticipated by organisers. In contrast to the roar of Elspa's consumer event, the trade-only EGN may have been a rather muted affair but it was one that many companies approved of – the lack of flashy stands and tub-thumping seen at most trade shows meant the event was far more conducive to conducting business.

> **"THE BRINGING TOGETHER OF ALL THE STRANDS OF OUR INDUSTRY HAS BROUGHT REAL BENEFITS TO THE GAMING COMMUNITY"**
> **FRED HASSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, TIGA**



But that's not to say that both shows weren't without their flaws. While Game Stars Live was packed with visitors and things for them to see, it had a somewhat soulless atmosphere and at times felt more like an over-lit aircraft hanger rather than the thriving show that we'd expected. The ExCeL exhibition facility itself was troublesome for some, with its Docklands setting provoking more than a few critical comments from those preferring a more central location. That said, such problems are teething troubles that can be rectified at future events. What's more, the suggestion from industry insiders that some of the publishers who stayed away (notably Sony) were quietly kicking



■ Has the UK blown its chance to remain the centre of European gaming? Hey, at least we have a climbing wall. Er…



themselves at missing out on the exposure should prove that Elspa got something right.

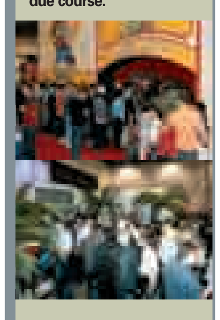
ECTS, on the other hand, was regarded as a shadow of its former self by many of those who visited Earl's Court, with many seeing CMP's efforts to transform the event into one focused on the development and service sides of the industry as too little, too late. One saving grace came in the form of the Game Developers Conference Europe that ran alongside the event. Sessions for the GDCE were busy (despite attendance being down on last year), which is more than could be said for The European Developer Forum (backed by the Independent Games Developers' Association) held alongside Elspa's shows. With reports suggesting that the audience for some EDF sessions was outnumbered by the people on stage and several speakers expressing their disappointment over the proceedings, ECTS managed to emerge triumphant in one respect.

However, the big question now is where each organisation goes from here, especially considering that the success of this year's Game Convention in Leipzig will pique the interest of developers and publishers. Several members of the industry have expressed concern over how, by dividing the attention of the industry with two events, UK show organisers have lost the opportunity of producing the definitive European E3 equivalent, while the general consensus appears to be that despite CMP's plans to return with another trade event in 2005, the ECTS name has suffered a devastating blow from which it can't recover.

Industry opinion aside, the fact remains that neither organiser is in a position to guarantee an event next year that can eclipse the Game Convention. The UK can ill afford to lose its status as the hub of the European development community, but with Leipzig swiftly becoming the more promising prospect, that may have already happened.

THERE'S ALWAYS NEXT YEAR

In an effort to score that all-important pre-emptive strike, Elspa has already announced the dates for its events in 2005. Unsurprisingly, the decision to grab the attention of younger games players before they return to school has brought the dates forward slightly, with Game Stars Live now running from 31 August until 4 September. On the industry side of things, the EGN and EDF events will run from 31 August to 2 September, with the whole thing being held once again at the ExCeL site in London's Docklands. Ticket prices and availability will be announced in due course.





NOT ANOTHER…

PSX STORY

PRICES SLASHED AS SONY'S MULTIMEDIA HARDWARE FLAGS IN HOMELAND

'Disappointing' isn't a word you'd naturally associate with Sony these days but it's more than apt when talking about the success (or lack thereof) of the PSX. The multimedia hardware, which was seen as an attempt by the Japanese company to create an 'all-in-one' home entertainment device, has been beset with problems from the very beginning – specifically, the fact that a number of important features were missing from the machine at its launch.

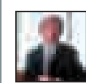
Despite Sony claiming that initial sales figures for the device were respectable, the recent news that several Japanese retailers have slashed the PSX's price in an effort to clear stock can't be seen as anything but troubling. The drop sees prices for the basic model almost halved, falling from ¥74,000 (£380) to just ¥39,800 (£200), while the more powerful version has also seen a similar reduction.

Sony has yet to respond to the move by retailers, although the fact that a proposed launch in both the US and Europe has yet to be confirmed suggests the firm is considering its options carefully. However, it's likely that lacklustre sales in Japan will postpone any announcement for the near future; if the technology-loving Japanese public aren't interested in Sony's approach to convergence, the chances of more conservative western electronics buffs lavishing their money on such an item aren't exactly high.

Still, this news hasn't stopped Sony revealing two new models of the PSX that will supercede the newly reduced machines. Focusing more on TV recording and media playback, there's no doubt that functionality in the two new versions has improved, but will these tweaks be enough?

Data Stream

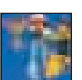
BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



CELL OUT

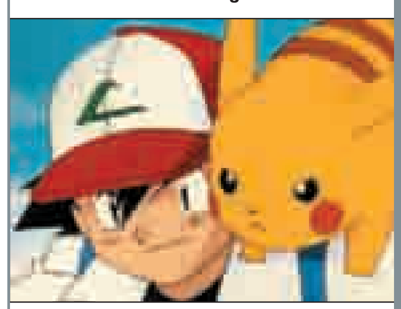
Toshiba president Tadashi Okamura has stated that the next-generation CELL chip "will be used in Sony's games machines". Details on the chip, in development since 2001, are still elusive although if current information is to be believed, commercial production will begin next year. Sony maintains that CELL workstations could be in operation by the end of the year and while it may still be a while before we'll actually see the finished product, it just makes you realise just how close to the next generation we really are. Buckle up, people – this one could get messy.

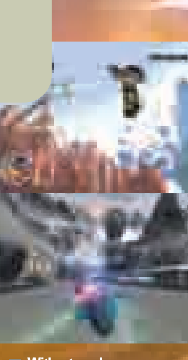




IT'S SUPER EFFECTIVE

Despite the fact that Pokémon's premise is forcing monsters to fight until near death, a US survey has found that many parents consider the franchise to be good for their children. Over three quarters of parents think the games do 'a good job of promoting positive values' as well as enhancing strategic thinking. Nintendo's George Harrison proclaimed, "We're proud to be a part of a videogame franchise that parents believe helps boost important skills like teamwork and memory that can translate to kids excelling in school."

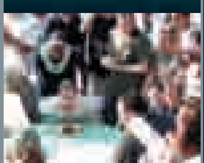




Without any huge-name franchises, Acclaim was going to find it tough.

HATE TO SAY I TOLD YOU SO

ACCLAIM FILES FOR BANKRUPTCY AFTER MONTHS OF TROUBLE



Publicity stunts were costly and, generally, rubbish.

Developer and publisher Acclaim has finally filed for bankruptcy following a lengthy period of commercial and financial faltering. The company's closure follows threats of de-listing from the Nasdaq stock exchange when share prices plummeted to just several cents, and on 2 September the firm filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy with debts of over $100 million.

It's hard to see how Acclaim could have survived in what will undoubtedly be a hard-fought holiday period this year. With hopefuls such as *Alias* failing to offer a lifeline, the firm's hottest prospect was competent racer *Juiced*, which will be up against the one that got away – *Burnout 3* – as well as new games in the *Need For Speed* and *Midnight Club* franchises. Add to that key releases such as *Halo 2, San Andreas* and *Metroid Prime 2* drawing public attention away from even the best new IPs and you have to conclude that even without such sudden liquidation, Acclaim didn't have long to live.

Before the closure of all of its offices, the proud firm of the Nineties had mutated into an almost unrecognisable entity. Years of haemorrhaging talent to the likes of Retro Studios didn't do Acclaim any favours and in-house output suffered greatly as a result – the fifth instalment of *Turok* was a foul-smelling full stop for the series and perhaps only the *Extreme G* games retained the old Acclaim magic. But it was the shambolic reworking of the classic *NBA Jam* that sealed the fate of the firm for us.

This news makes Acclaim the second major player to go under this generation, following the demise of 3DO last May. Much like in that instance, it looks like many of Acclaim's properties will be snapped up by other hopefuls. *Juiced,* however, looks to be safe from being sold off thanks to its financial backing from other sources, although it will need a new publisher if it is to get a chance to square up to the big boys of the genre.

Gone but not forgotten, you can find Acclaim's remains buried under the *Shadowman: 2econd Coming* headstone if you want to pay your respects to the development teams who are going to suffer… or point and laugh at the publisher's string of bad choices.

MORE GAME ART
HITS THE MAINSTREAM

NOT TO BE MYST

In another move that shows the growing acceptance of gaming design as a recognised art form, London's South Bank Dali Museum recently played host to an exhibition of artwork from the *Myst* series. Clearly, having game artwork displayed alongside the likes of Dali and Picasso represents a monumental shift in public and critical perception of the work that goes into game creation.

"The *Myst* series has developed over the last decade to become one of the most beautiful and well-loved games in the world of videogames," said John Parkes, marketing director at Ubisoft. "We are pleased that everyone who put so much time, effort and, most of all, passion into the making of the *Myst* series can be rewarded with this recognition from the art world."

Jenny Bidwell, head of marketing at County Hall Gallery, thinks the world of *Myst* complements more traditional art. "Salvador Dali and *Myst* both strive to push the boundaries and challenge our perceptions of reality," she said.

While an art-heavy series like *Myst* is an obvious choice for an exhibition, we're not expecting less conventional but equally beautiful games (such as *Rez* or *Parappa*) to receive the same recognition. At least, not yet.



Go all *Mysty* in the middle of London.

games™ THE TOP FIVE

WAYS TO KILL A COMPANY

No.5 BACK THE WRONG HORSE
Why pour money into horrible games?

No.4 SLIPPING STANDARDS
Watch your franchises fall from grace

No.3 NEGLECT
Lose one of the best games ever

No.2 WOEFUL MARKETING
Waste your money on lame PR stunts

No.1 RELEASE VEXX
Kiss of death. Developers, take heed…

NEW DEAL SEES VIVENDI TITLES FILTER INTO JAPAN

VIVENDI HEADS EAST

In a bid to get its talons into the Japanese market – a feat that's stumped many western firms – Vivendi Universal has struck a deal with Konami that will see the Japanese company publish a selection of VUG titles in the east. There are currently four titles with confirmed dates; film tie-in *Van Helsing* is already available while *Crash Twinsanity* and the latest Game Boy Advance versions of *Crash* and *Spyro* will all become available in December.

The *Crash Bandicoot* series has proved to be an alarming success in Japan, so it was hardly surprising that eyes should turn to dollar signs when a new game was announced. In addition, *Red Ninja* and an as-yet undisclosed title will be released through Konami in the New Year. Deals such as this are far from rare – Electronic Arts has a similar arrangement with Square Enix (which goes some way towards explaining the popularity of titles like *Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun* in Japan) while Capcom has previously published Rockstar's *Grand Theft Auto* series in the east, as well as other games for publishers such as Activision.

Such pairings are, of course, mutually beneficial as well as being great for the consumer, allowing releases that otherwise might not be possible and expanding the reach of existing titles. But don't expect Vivendi get its paws on *Metal Gear* or *Pro Evolution Soccer* any time soon

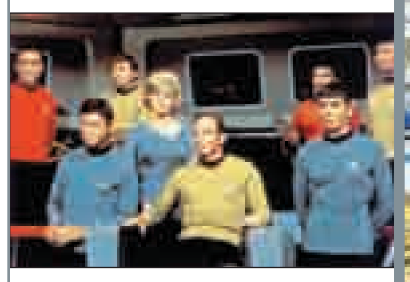
Data stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



TO BOLDLY GO…

In one of the most bizarre licence acquisitions we've seen, rookie developer Perpetual Entertainment has been signed up to create an MMORPG based on *Star Trek*. With a slated 2006 beta followed by a 2007 release, there's still a long wait for fans, but we've already got an idea of what to expect – the FAQ on startrek.com makes the game sound an awful lot like *Star Wars Galaxies*. Not that this is a bad thing. Interestingly, Perpetual also reported that it received $6.5 million in additional financing on the same day as announcing the game. Illogical? Hardly.





WHAT'S IN A NAME?

As you read this, stores around the country are cramming their store rooms with as many Gizmondo handhelds as they can in preparation for the unit's 29 October release. Okay, so that's not strictly true, but for those of you that have been following the progress of the all-singing, all-dancing device, news that you'll be able to pick one up shortly for £229.99 with a choice of 11 titles at launch will most likely fill you with glee. We still can't get over that bizarre name, though. Apparently, it's very popular in Europe, but then so are DJ Otzi and David Hasselhoff.





Great game, just a shame about the servers…

EA'S XBOX LIVE DEBUT PROVES TO BE FAR FROM PERFECT

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION

It should have been a milestone weekend in Xbox Live's history: the moment when *Burnout 3: Takedown* hit stores and Electronic Arts became an official provider of Xbox Live gaming. As it turned out, it was a weekend that EA would rather forget – two days of nothing but criticism from Xbox Live users over the company's failure to provide a decent online service.

The problems appear to stem from EA's decision to manage the online Xbox content for its games itself (including providing its own servers), rather using Microsoft's already proven structure. Users reported all manner of faults, including an inability to invite or even see friends who were playing the game at the same time, continual loss of network connection, and problems with joining races.

EA acted quickly to try to alleviate the problem although news of the improvements was kept quiet, with no official statement being made about its efforts to remedy the situation. However, the results of the repairs seem to be varied, with many people still claiming that nothing has improved. At the time of going to press, **games™** still suffered problems with the service – in particular, Xbox network errors and repeated instances of being ejected from games without good reason – though we understand that more repairs are being carried out.

Of course, the concern here isn't just that one of the biggest publishers in the world disappointed so many people, but how this could affect gamers' perceptions of Xbox Live. EA's Xbox online system is currently somewhat unreliable; a system that it will no doubt want to implement in its upcoming Live titles such as *FIFA Football 2005* and *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent*. These games will be many gamers' first experience of Xbox Live and you have to wonder what impression they'll get from a service that isn't totally reliable. If it's anything like the reaction from long-running Xbox Live users, it'll put a dent in EA's reputation with online gamers.

Both EA and Microsoft were unable to comment on the matter, although an EA spokesman did confirm that the company "immediately shifted resources to address the server issues, and the problems that have now been identified are being addressed as quickly and efficiently as possible."



PLAYSTATION2 TO BE REBRANDED

SONY SEES A SHRINK

Sony has confirmed what many had suspected – the release of a slimmer, Ethernet-enabled version of the PlayStation2, aptly named the PStwo. The unit has retained the same sort of style as the original PlayStation2 but is incredibly thin – a feat made possible by restructuring the internal architecture of the machine. Internal volume has been reduced by 75 per cent, the weight has been halved, and the width (or height, depending on how you look at it) trimmed to 2.8cm from 7.8cm.

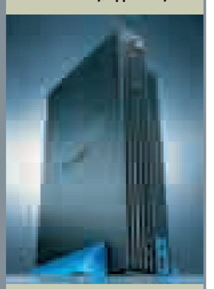
While early predictions from inside the US entertainment industry cited a late October release date, Sony has confirmed the new system will hit stores on 1 November in the US and Europe, costing $149 and €149 (around £100) respectively. Japan will get the machine on 3 November, and it will cost ¥3,780.

As well as being thinner, the PStwo also comes with network access and an analogue modem port, allowing newcomers to get into the online side of things without having to purchase extra hardware.

"This totally redesigned, network-ready model will demonstrate once again that PlayStation has the design flair and innovation that has made PlayStation the world's best-loved and most successful games console," said David Reeves, president of SCEE.



PS2? PStwo? What's in a name? Money, apparently.



BLAIR BACKS VIOLENT VIDEOGAME INQUIRY

WILL IT NEVER END?

The trend of criticising videogames has come round once again, with Prime Minister Tony Blair expressing his support of a re-examination of the subject of videogame violence.

This comes as a result of demands from Leicester East MP Keith Vaz that new research be commissioned into the possible connection between games and violent behaviour in children. Vaz, who represents the constituency where 18-year-old Warren LeBlanc committed a murder allegedly inspired by *Manhunt*, has backed calls from the parents of victim Stefan Pakeerah that violent games should have tighter restrictions on them, or be banned altogether.

However, despite agreeing that the subject should undergo further examination, Mr Blair also said that he supported the classification system currently used in the UK.

"Responsible adults should have the right to watch and choose what games they play and films they see, but children need to be protected," he said. "We actually have Europe's strongest system for controlling the sale of computer games that are not suitable for children, run by the Video Standards Council, which applies the familiar British Board of Film Classification rating system."

Despite this, Mr Blair said the subject is "worth looking at closely".



GAMES ROOM 101

THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF VIDEOGAMING

NO. 24: DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

When does *GT4* comes? and "the *gta* trilogys kills the mario one"; just a few of the choice cuts you'll find in a trawl of websites that allow readers to contribute their own game reviews. It's not this process we have a problem with – some are as well written as those in any magazine – but with the blinkered critiques of games that aren't even out, and ego-massaging reviews created solely to prove a point.

The former are by far the funniest. Already, ebgames.com boasts over 650 user reviews of *GTA: San Andreas* while Amazon lists some 350 for *Halo 2*, each more irrelevant than the last. The number of times you'll read "My uncle works at Bungie" or "My dad's best friend's sister knows Mario" is pretty disturbing, especially when closer inspection reveals their 'reviews' to be jumbled works of fiction.

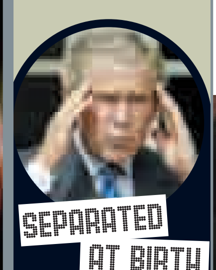
A trip to GameFAQs, on the other hand, offers a very different literary selection. Among the gushing nines and tens, there's almost always the token two, and when a *Virtua Fighter 4* review starts with "I am better than you when it comes to discussing fighters", it's hard to take the ensuing pages of clueless gibberish seriously.

So please, think before you type....



Apparently, *Halo 2* 'roxxors!!11!'

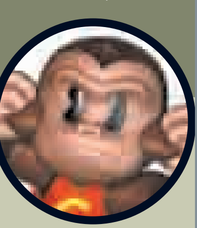
Yes, it's a *Halo 2* rant – a game that, as you read this, will still be over a month away. Idiot.



SEPARATED AT BIRTH

games™ tracks down those videogame lookalikes

Not only does George Bush look scarily like *Super Monkey Ball*'s GonGon, he's also someone we'd love to seal in a giant globe and push off a ledge. Amazing coincidence, that.





BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



I'M WORKING BACKWARDS FOR XBOX

With the backward-compatibility issue hanging over the Xbox 2 due to a change in the console's chipset, Transitive Corporation's CEO, Bob Wiederhold, thinks Xbox game playback might still be possible. The firm's QuickTransit software, which allows programs compiled for one processor to be run by another, could allow 'Xenon' to be backwards compatible according to Wiederhold, but the memory constraints of consoles compared to the computers for which the code was created would probably rule this out. With the additional threat of legal action from Nvidia against Microsoft should 'Xenon' sport such functionality, we're not holding our breath.





DOMINIK DIAMOND RETURNS WITH A NEW SHOW

BOX CLEVER

For those of you who have been demanding a decent videogames-related TV show, it looks as though your prayers have been answered. Hosted by Dominik Diamond and created by Gamer.tv, *When Games Attack* will be on Bravo by the end of the year.

The show promises to offer reviews, charts, features and a series-long celebrity football tournament with, we're assured, a twist. Those of you expecting the usual dry and repetitive mix of games coverage may be in for a surprise.

"This show isn't for humourless geeks who get a stiffy over screenshots of *Halo 2*," says Diamond. "It's a comedy show first and foremost. We don't have charisma-bypassed journalists or vacuous children giving their opinion. We have me. And a couple of cute puppets. We don't go over to America to interview some dull programmer about cel-shading. We interview poets in the Las Vegas desert. I do dogfights in fighter planes. We feature things like *EverQuest II*, but only because I wanted to dress up as a goblin and freak straight-assed Americans out."

When Games Attack will be co-hosted by Caroline Flack (as seen in Bravo's football reality show *Fash FC*) and is set to replace the long-running *GamePad* in November.

GamesMaster for the 21st Century? We'll see…

THE GAME GROUP TAKES ITS BATTLE ONLINE

GAME ON

Game has managed to bolster its already solid position within the UK games retail industry thanks to its purchase last month of popular online retailer Gameplay.

The buyout was not entirely unexpected, with Gameplay having a turbulent history – things went downhill swiftly in late 2000, despite its previous ventures into online gaming and even plans to set itself up as a games publisher.

Although Game already has a successful online store, Gameplay has been left as a separate brand for the time being with the site merely being added to Game's online portfolio. Previous owners Andy Mee and Lisa Burke are still running the operation, and Game has said that it is still too early to say what the company's plans are for the site.

Game's renewed interest in the online market is no great surprise. With the company already the undisputed leader on the high street, conquering the online competition was bound to be on the agenda. So where does the next target lie?





Meaningless waffle from the industry

THIS MONTH This month, Eidos chairman John van Kuffeler puts on his rose-tinted glasses to give us a flowery outlook for 2005



"While the results for the year to June 2004 are disappointing, the company's underlying business and product portfolio remain strong"

games™ says: Yes, that's right – because *Crash 'n' Burn*, *'Championship Manager'* and a sequel to *Angel Of Disappointment* will save you…"

MORE FROM MR CHIPS NEXT MONTH!

Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



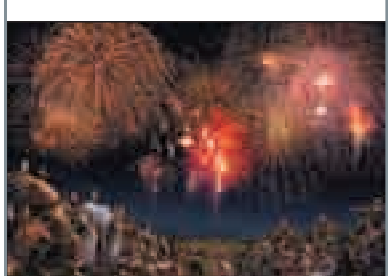
RAMASES, COLOSSUS

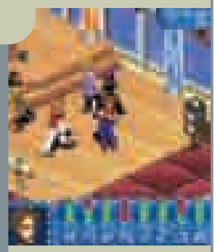
As many avid net-watchers will have noticed, the Sony teaser site which was hacked to reveal the words 'Nico' and 'Genji' recently has, well… vanished. Thankfully, this departure from cyberspace coincided with the official announcements of *Genji* and *Wanda And The Colossus*, the official name for the project we've all come to refer to as 'Nico'. A spiritual sequel to *Ico* but one that director Kenji Kaido claims will be more "intense", the story looks to follow a young hero's plight in taking on huge stone golems to save the girl he loves. Expect to see plenty more soon.



HUH, HUH, HUH!

Seeing as how many franchises envision their futures as online phenomena, it's with just the slightest hint of surprise that we report that Koei's *Dynasty Warriors* series will be taking to the net shortly. Available only to Softbank/Yahoo Broadband subscribers in Japan, the PC game certainly sounds promising – three separate modes will allow for solo, group and large-scale battles while character creation and progression will be key. Plans for the game's release in other territories have not been announced, but are not unlikely.



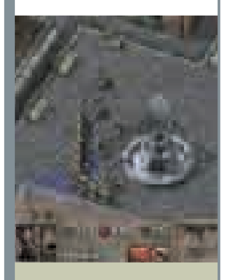


We're looking forward to getting a few more tiny little lives on our phones.



PATHWAY TO GLORY

There may well be plenty of people out there who think that a real-time strategy title on the N-Gage just wouldn't work – trying to cram a big game onto a small screen is generally not advised – but in the case of *Pathway To Glory*, it actually works quite well. Set in World War II, the the game lets players create and control their own platoon through various historically accurate missions. The graphics are crisp and a suitably dramatic musical score accompanies the action. If you're after some tactical thinking for your N-Gage, you're not really spoilt for choice, but this is the best example we've seen so far.





EA BUILDS DIGITAL BRIDGES

NEW DEAL EXTENDS EA'S MOBILE INTERESTS

A deal announced at the European Games Network conference last month has indicated that Electronic Arts is starting to tighten its grip on the mobile gaming market. As the mobile games market grows, so does the interest from the industry superpowers, and it was only a matter of time before EA decided it wanted a bigger slice of the pie.

Obviously feeling that it doesn't have enough influence in the games industry at the moment, this new arrangement with Scotland–based wireless games firm Digital Bridges means that EA will now be bringing many of its most successful franchises to the mobile phone format. The new deal has also expanded on EA's original contract and has granted Digital Bridges exclusive rights to distribute all EA mobile games in Europe and America.

This means we can look forward to seeing popular titles like *Need For Speed Underground 2*, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005* and everyone's favourite life replacement, *The Sims*, on our mobiles some time over the next year.

NOKIA CELLS A MILLION



SHIPMENTS OF THE N-GAGE HAVE HIT THE MILLION MARK

N-Gage owners, rejoice – Nokia has revealed that shipments of the mobile have reached a million units worldwide. Although these figures represent shipment numbers rather than actual sales, the figure for units sold is unlikely to be far from the million mark and we can probably expect an announcement regarding sales fairly soon.

The revelation that wasn't expected was the fact that the N-Gage's strongest sales were in the UK; surprising, considering the relatively poor start the handheld saw over here when compared to other territories.

In addition to the announcement of the shipping figures, it was also revealed that roughly 150,000 users are signed up to the N-Gage Arena service. This figure represents about 15 per cent of N-Gage owners, which is a huge achievement. Are things looking up for the N-Gage? Nokia will hope so.



YU SUZUKI'S ARCADE RACING LEGACY RESTS ON THIS MAN'S SHOULDERS – ONE FOOT WRONG AND THE OUTRUN NAME WOULD BE SULLIED FOREVER. WHO SAID JAPANESE DEVELOPERS DON'T RELISH A CHALLENGE?



"IT IS GETTING HARDER TO DIFFERENTIATE ARCADE MACHINES FROM HOME CONSOLES IN TERMS OF GRAPHICS, SO WE NEED TO DO IT IN OTHER WAYS"

MAKOTO OSAKI, GENERAL CREATIVE MANAGER, SEGA-AM2

MAKOTO OSAKI

SEGA-AM2

It's 1986 and around the world, arcades are filled with the screech of tyres, the squeal of brakes and the tuneful tones of 'Magical Sound Shower'. Life was good as *OutRun* earned its place in gaming history. Fast forward to 2003 and the unthinkable is happening – Sega has relented and created a 'proper' sequel to one of the finest arcade racers ever created. Despite a 17-year hiatus. And a worldwide slump in the arcade market. And the possibility that fans of the original could revolt if it doesn't meet their expectations. Is Sega mad?

Maybe not. As head of the project, Makoto Osaki (creative manager at Sega-AM2) understands today's arcade market and the demands placed on those trying to create something new and exciting for the modern arcade gamer. "In the old days, Sega was creating games that it wasn't sure there was a market for," he explains. "It was essentially exploring new fields of gaming. However, a good deal of time has passed and videogames are no longer about being an 'all-new, mentally stimulating thing'; instead, it's about being popular entertainment, similar to movies or books. Despite the change of times, though, I want to make games that I believe are interesting, and that is vital to the development process."

While this shows that the people behind Sega's arcade development are passionate about what they do, it doesn't change the fact that the heyday of arcade gaming seems to have passed. Where once the appearance of a game masquerading as a full-sized formula one car or a motorbike was revolutionary, today it's the norm. Or at least, it would be if people bothered to visit arcades any more. Japan's arcade industry may be thriving through a combination of strategically-placed establishments and what Osaki considers "a lack of social skills" among Japanese gamers in contrast to their western brethren, but as European and American gamers stay in with their consoles rather than face the outside world, it's getting harder for arcade developers to pull in the crowds.

"It's undeniable that it's getting harder to differentiate arcade machines from home consoles in terms of graphics," says Osaki, "so we need to differentiate in other ways. Before, there were a lot of arcade games whose concepts were 'something you couldn't have at home' such as the bigger arcade machines, but that's nothing new now. Still, I think there are still some concepts specific for arcade machines that can never be replicated at home, and I believe that the coexistence of arcade games and home consoles is possible if we can achieve those concepts."

Before you jump to conclusions, these 'concepts' aren't necessarily massive cabinets adorned with flashing lights, infra-red movement detectors or any other over-the-top gimmick that some developers have resorted to. Certainly, a handful of Sega's more recent arcade efforts (such as the *Rainbow Six*-style lightgun blaster *Ghost Squad* or the sit-down behemoth that is *World Club Champion Football)* may stray into that category. For the most part, though, it's still the fundamentals of gameplay that prove the important factor.

"More traditional action-based games or games that make use of gimmicks… it doesn't matter," says Osaki. "The only thing I consider is if a game is acceptable for players or not. I don't think that arcade games have to rely solely on large cabinets and gimmicks – it's just important to get a proper balance. After all, it's fresh in my memory that *Pac-Man* and *Galaga* became a huge hit in the US arcade market; neither of these had gimmicks or large cabinets, which speaks volumes about how difficult the game business is to predict."

Of course, with Sega now one of the few big names left in the arcade business, it's a risk it's going to have to live with. Just as producing a sequel to the greatest ever arcade racing game didn't faze him, though, a small challenge like rejuvenating the arcade industry isn't a problem for Osaki. "My ambition is to produce big hit games that will make a mark on the history of games. I have no personal ambitions for any particular job or achievement; it's the games I produce that are important for me."

OutRun 2 is out now on Xbox and is reviewed on page 110.

SIGN OF THE TIMES

IS IT A PDA? A CONSOLE? A VIDEOPLAYER? NO – IT'S ALL THREE. AS TAPWAVE'S ZODIAC BRAVELY PREPARES TO ENTER THE CROWDED HANDHELD FRAY, WE GIVE IT A THOROUGH TEST RUN TO SEE IF IT'S WORTHY OF YOUR ATTENTION…

You'd think that now wouldn't be the best time for handheld manufacturers to enter what is about to become an incredibly overcrowded market. One look at the looming figures of Sony's PSP and Nintendo's DS on the horizon, along with Tiger's Gizmondo, would send any right-minded company back to safe ground to rethink battle plans. And that's not even mentioning the stranglehold that the Game Boy Advance and SP currently hold on the handheld market.

Yet the lure of a potentially bloody fight seems to be having the opposite effect and now, after much debate as to whether it was going to happen or not, the Zodiac has waded into the melee charged with the



THE LOWDOWN



Attractive, useable and packed full of features – even if it's not a traditional handheld games unit.

unenviable task of finding a gap that other handhelds haven't exploited.

Unsurprisingly, the Zodiac has several advantages that could turn the tide in its favour. Based as it is on the latest iteration of Palm OS, the handheld offers competent programmers every opportunity to make good use of the graphical capabilities and the perfect platform to display their creativity. What's more, the first signs of an emulation scene have already trickled into view, with Zodiac-specific Mega Drive and SNES emulators the first signs of things to come.

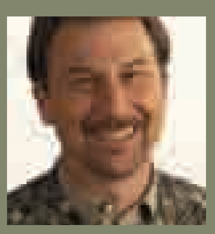
However, there aren't just emulators and homebrew programming on show and Tapwave has ensured that software support is also available for its handheld. Activision, Atari and Midway are currently on board as supporting publishers and, hopefully, Sega will also offer more IP given its rather paltry offerings of *Altered Beast* and *Golden Axe* thus far. Registering your Zodiac at www.tapwave.com enables you to buy and download games straight from the official website, with the most expensive retailing at just $29.99. Games can be downloaded either straight onto SD memory cards that slot into the top of the Zodiac or transferred over from a PC, while the Bluetooth-enabled multiplayer and rumble options show that Tapwave has been paying attention to detail as far as gaming goes.

But then, the Zodiac isn't just a gaming handheld – instead, Tapwave is

"THE **ZODIAC ISN'T COMPETING** WITH OTHER HANDHELD GAMING DEVICES – INSTEAD, IT BELONGS IN A **UNIQUE HYBRID CATEGORY** ALL OF ITS VERY OWN"

marketing it as a full-on lifestyle package. The fact that the unit features movie playback (in MPEG, Quicktime and AVI formats) and MP3 features is a definite plus, although the film resolution isn't the sharpest, tending to pixellate some scenes that feature fine detail or contrasting colours rubbing against each other. However, it's as a portable data assistant that the unit really excels.

Featuring virtually every available feature that a regular PDA has (including the option for reading eBooks, uploading and viewing photos, 'graffiti writing' that fills in for a lack of keyboard, and thousands more) as well as the option to use almost any program made for Palm OS, Tapwave has made sure that such usage isn't just tacked onto the gaming side of things. Currently, Tapwave has yet to confirm a European price or release date in retail stores nationwide. However, the Zodiac currently retails for $299 in the States and should be available to buy at the official website (www.tapwave.com) by the time you read this.

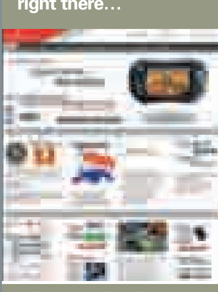


"RIGHT OUT OF THE GATE, EUROPEAN INTEREST IN THE ZODIAC HAS BEEN STRONG – FROM THE CONSUMERS AND MEDIA TO THE DISTRIBUTORS AND THE DEVELOPERS"

BYRON CONNELL, TAPWAVE

TAPWAVE

Tapwave's confidence for the Zodiac comes partly from the background of the company – three of its founder members all have a huge amount of experience in the field. Founder Byron Connell is a high-tech industry veteran with credits at both Palm and Hewlett-Packard, VP of Engineering Marian Cauwet previously held the same position at Palm and VP of Sales David Wenning has run the sales departments of both Palm and Apple in the past. That's a whole lot of experience right there…



Tapwave's official Zodiac site offers everything you need.

TRIESD & TESTED

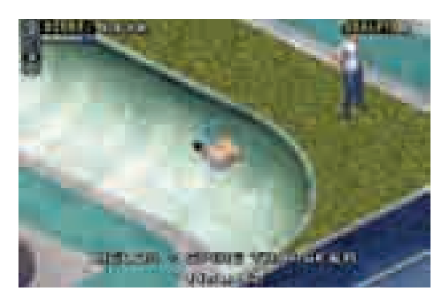
GAME ON

As impressive as Zodiac's multimedia options are, it's positioned itself as a games console and will therefore live and die by its games. Some minor interest titles designed to make use of the stylus aside though, that job will fall to the likes of the following…

GAME ONE

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4

Given the omnipresent nature of the *Tony Hawk's* series, it's no surprise to see the lanky Californian make an appearance on the Zodiac. Taking its cue from the Game Boy Advance versions, this is a competent addition to the series, even if it can't help but highlight problems with the shoulder buttons' design. Still, the vast range of options and wireless multiplayer mode also show that mobile gaming doesn't always mean compromises.

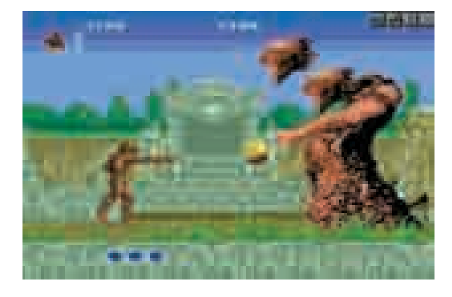


AN IMPRESSIVE EFFORT FROM ACTIVISION

GAME TWO

Altered Beast

Unbearably slow by today's standards and virtually redundant in the face of a burgeoning emulation scene, *Altered Beast* shows that the Zodiac's line-up isn't all roses. It's a good enough conversion but ultimately this smacks of the attitude that with so few other titles available, dumping anything on the Zodiac will do for now.



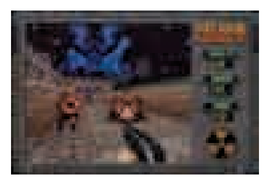
EMULATION CAN BE BETTER THAN THIS…

TRIED & TESTED

GAME THREE

Duke Nukem Mobile

It's pleasing that this runs comfortably on Zodiac with the nonchalance that Duke Nukem himself continually exudes, yet the controls are the real surprise here. Using the analogue stick to move and aim, with the shoulder buttons assigned to strafing duties, it's a remarkably smooth experience that accommodates the fast shooting action. If *Duke Nukem* can be shrunk down without losing either control or charm, it bodes well for future FPS titles.





A DECENT, IF SLIGHTLY LIMITED SHOOTER

GAME FOUR

Atari Retro

The idea of duplicating Atari's hit titles of yesteryear pixel for chunky pixel on the Zodiac is good – it's just the patchy execution of this compilation that's disappointing, with the over-sensitive analogue control proving unsuitable for games that demand precise movement such as *Pong* and *Breakout*. Other games such as *Asteroids* and *Missile Command* remain enjoyable even after all this time, though, with *Adventure* being the highlight of Atari's collection.





CLASSIC GAMES… SHAME ABOUT THE EXECUTION

"ANALOGUE CONTROLS, RICH SOUND, PREMIER TITLES FROM THE INDUSTRY'S LEADING PUBLISHERS… BASICALLY, IT'S A GAMES CONSOLE THAT FITS IN YOUR POCKET"

TAPWAVE PRESS RELEASE

GAME FIVE

Legacy

The presentation will hit the nostalgia nerve in anyone who's played *Eye Of The Beholder* or *Dungeon Master*, using a similar 2D screen to navigate 3D environments. The touch-screen stylus is used to good effect, mimicking the mouse control of the original games perfectly. Nevertheless, it's open to debate if *Legacy* can appeal to modern gamers by being so stubbornly rooted in age-old presentation values and gameplay.



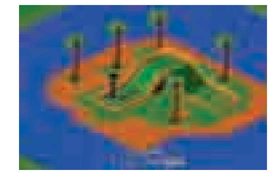


OLD-SCHOOL, BUT STILL VERY ENJOYABLE

GAME SIX

Pocket Mini-Golf

This has popped up before in various Flash guises on the net but that hasn't diluted the appeal of this simple, endearing game. The stylus makes *Pocket Mini-Golf* more a challenge of getting a clear shot than aiming skill as your character hits the ball towards wherever you touch the screen. So it's easier than it should be but until we see a golf game that uses the stylus to more imaginative effect, it's good enough.





SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE, BUT HARDLY ORIGINAL

"THE ZODIAC'S MULTIPLE ABILITIES – GAMING, PDA, PHOTO AND VIDEO COMPATIBILITY, AS WELL AS FULL MP3 PLAYBACK – MAKE IT A JOY FOR GADGET FANS"

CONTROL FREAK

Design is everything, but the Zodiac's beauty comes at a price…



The analogue stick isn't a stick – more of a pad on an analogue ball. Games without a sensitivity control option could frustrate as the pad proves twitchy and fiddly. This design also all but rules out the likelihood of beat-'em-ups proving playable.



The gap between the buttons isn't a problem unless playing a game that requires more than one button to be pressed at the same time. In *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4*, for example, it's tough to master the high-scoring techniques.

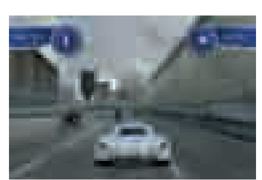


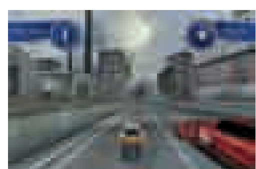
It may look pretty, but console gamers won't enjoy adjusting from typically chunky shoulder buttons to the Zodiac's slimline versions. It can be hard to know if you've pressed them or not, which can prove annoying on occasion.

GAME SEVEN

SpyHunter

Following the farce of the recent *SpyHunter 2* remake, this mobile version opts for the simplicity of the original and restores some credibility to the series. The objective is the same – race to the end of the level while fending off various attacks from other vehicles – and control is smooth. With the action flying by at a suitable steady rate (and never appearing to let up as you race through the levels), *SpyHunter* translates well to the smaller screen.



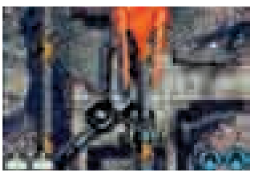


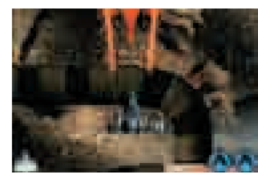
A SURPRISING SUCCESS FROM THE SERIES

GAME EIGHT

Fire Hammer

As far as shmups are concerned, *Fire Hammer* is an enjoyable distraction but no more; the scoring system of catching multipliers that fall from destroyed enemies is just enough to keep the gameplay appealing. What's interesting is that *Fire Hammer* is one of several games that flip the screen vertical to allow for a genuine shmup experience – an option that could pave the way for some genuniely creative ideas from more daring developers.



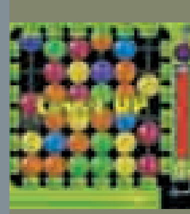


A DECENT BLASTER WITH SOME POTENTIAL

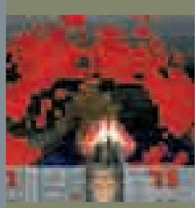
EVEN MORE GAMES

The Best Of The Rest

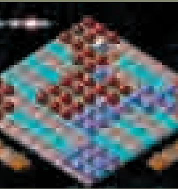
Naturally, this is simply a taster of the types of games that you can play on the Zodiac – there are plenty more besides, with many coming from the world of PDA gaming as opposed to being specifically developed for the system. Of course, this does also mean that the games tend to fall into the category of being simple but engrossing rather than them being the kind of titles that you'd expect to see on a more traditional handheld; games such as *Paintball* (match up lines of patterned balls by changing their colour), *Snails* (a sly rip-off of the *Worms* franchise) and *Gamebox Gems* are certainly enjoyable but more suited for short periods of play rather than extended sessions. That said, however, the list of 'proper' games being produced for the Zodiac is growing steadily. Activision and Midway are already signed up as regular contributors, with a virtually perfect port of *Doom II* already available on the system and more games besides. With the support of a few more publishers, Tapwave could very well find the niche in the market that it needs.



Simple, but as addictive as *Tetris* – that's *Paintball*.



Doom II on the Zodiac is a very faithful conversion.



Colony – a hard, but rather interesting puzzler.

CONCLUSION



A SUCCESS IN THE MAKING

TAPWAVE'S EFFORTS ARE A BAND APART

On the surface, it's easy to make the lazy assumption that Zodiac falls into the area between the forthcoming handhelds that will bolt from the Sony and Nintendo stables. The slick feel and look of the console screams PSP, while the DS shares its touch-screen and stylus combination with Zodiac. However, it's what's underneath the surface that marks this handheld device as different from either of those and places it more in Gizmondo territory (or even beyond) as a convergence device that's also a gaming platform.

Which leads us to the biggest concern regarding the Zodiac. In an ideal scenario, Zodiac would gain from its unique position by grabbing gamers from the PSP and DS battle and also from under the noses of Tiger's Gizmondo. With the movie playback, touch-screen and stylus, Bluetooth options and emulator scene under its belt, the Zodiac is certainly capable of doing that. However, it's just as possible that gamers will stick to the PSP and DS for playing games, which these handhelds will arguably do better. Clearly, Zodiac's success as a gaming device depends on the titles available for the system (whether commercially or through emulators) and how the price will compare to its rivals.

Nevertheless, the Zodiac also gets many things right – not in the least because it manages to break the convergence barrier that has already proved a stumbling block for handhelds such as the N-Gage. The PDA, movie/MP3 and gaming combination isn't nearly as clumsy as it sounds, while the initial wave of games shows promising things ahead. Of course, the open source possibilities of emulators on the go will be more than a little mouth-watering for the more mature gamer, and with a few more big players on board such as EA and Konami, Tapwave could earn the surprise success it craves. The technology is certainly in place – now all that's needed is the enthusiasm of gamers and a thriving homebrew scene for the handheld to build upon.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

WITH YOUR FRIENDLY EX-PATRIOT, THE SHAPE

"MRS SHAPE'S FAMILY IS FULL OF SIRS AND DOCTORS AND CAMBRIDGE HER-SIDE I WAS SURPRISED WHEN CONVERSATION TURNED TO

John Kerry recently introduced his wife at a fund-raising luncheon in the Sheraton Boston Hotel by saying that he "married up". I am the same way. Mrs Shape's family is full of sirs and doctors and Cambridge grads and millionaires. Mine is full of bandits and forgers and organ traffickers. And so when I found myself in the Harvard Club at a family-wedding–on-her-side, 38 floors above the streets of bean town against a stunning panorama of the sun setting on the city, I did not expect videogames to be the topic of my table. But they were. And I didn't start it. Swear.

Over the clink and squeak of cutlery meeting china through filet mignon, familiar words lifted my ears. Two teen brothers on the opposite side of the table were discussing *Halo*. Someone who knows my secrets had apparently told them I had something to do with games. The boys were very similar, with the same hair and features. I'm going to say for comedic effect that they spoke in unison, like evil twins do in popular cinema, but they did not. I asked if they liked *Halo*.

"Yeah, that's all we play," they droned in eerie unison, manic smiles spreading across their faces, delighted to be engaged by anything other than the ambling procedures of holy matrimony. "*Halo*'s the best!" I was moved to observe that, brilliant though *Halo* is, it's pretty old. Hadn't the boys tried anything else?

"We just play *Halo*," they announced with unnerving synchronisation. "All the time."

"How 'bout some of the other shooters that have come out since? *Ghost Recon*, *Wolfenstein*, *TimeSplitters 2*?"

"Nah. When's *Halo 2* coming out?"

"November ninth."

"That's already been delayed, right? It was meant to come out in April already."

"But this time they really mean it," I said.

"So what do you play most?" asked a cousin of Mrs Shape's, a doctor in his thirties sitting to my right, whom I will call 'Jamie'. Dammit, that's his name. Chad, then, Chad. It was his brother who was getting married. "If you play all of these new games, what d'you play most?"

I suppose I play *Rainbow Six* most. Not because it's the best game in the world but it's a really good way to play my friends back in Britain, as I've said here before. I conveyed this to Chad.

"I've got that one, man! It's too hard."

"Too hard?"

"Yeah it's…" and he made the universal gesture for using a control pad, cupping the hands and wiggling the thumbs, adding a frustrated scowl. "Too many buttons, you know?"

It did not occur to me at the time that this man legally practises medicine. "But that's the beauty," I reasoned. "Those extra commands are for doing stuff you can't do in other games."



■ *Rainbow Six* isn't brain surgery. It's much harder, apparently.



GRADS. SO AT A FAMILY-WEDDING-ON-VIDEOGAMES. AND I DIDN'T START IT"

"Nah, it's too much," he rejected, "I just want to see something on screen and…"

"Kill it?"

"Yeah. I just want something to pop out in front of me and shoot it."

"You should come online," I proposed. "I'll show you how to do it."

Chad went on to explain that he'd bought the necessary hardware, hooked up the Xbox to the broadband network but never taken the last step of registering on Live. Soon it was time for delicious chocolate dessert. Conversation shifted and toasts were made by men who looked like grand corporate CEO portraits come to life (I imagine because they are or were CEOs of grand corporations). The evening moved on. I slyly relocated to another room, just in time, as always, to avoid the Dance Gestapo, a loose coalition of rabid, undead relatives driven by the dark purpose of uniting the dance floor with myself.

On the way back to my hotel, I thought about how surprising it was to have such a conversation among these kinds of people and in this setting, how unlikely it would have been five years ago. A type of culture shift, perhaps. But then, there'd been a lot of free Michelob Ultra at the reception and I also found myself devoting a lot of thought to the Boston street signs, wondering how Milk Street got its name and if its position next to Water Street was significant.

Many thanks



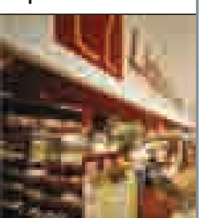
MISS ABOUT BRITAIN…

Centigrade



LOVE ABOUT AMERICA…

Liquorland



WANT ANY QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY THE SHAPE? THEN DROP HIM A LINE AT: theshape@comcast.net HE MIGHT LISTEN, IF YOU'RE LUCKY

AMERIKAAN

PRODUCTS, PLACES, SERVICES AND EVENTS FROM THE LAND OF THE FREE

PARTY CITY



This chain of giant stores exists purely to aid in the daily execution of parties. Costumes, decorations, props, novelties. Around big party dates such as Halloween, the chaos that greets the eye among the overcrowded aisles is comparable to the Normandy beach landings.

US MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Madden NFL 2005	EA Sports	PS2
2	Driv3r	Atari	PS2
3	Test Drive: Eve Of Destruction	Atari	PS2
4	Street Racing Syndicate	Namco	PS2
5	Street Racing Syndicate	Namco	Xbox
6	Madden NFL 2005	EA Sports	Xbox
7	NCAA Football 2005	EA Sports	PS2
8	Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow	Ubisoft	Xbox
9	Spider-Man 2	Activision	PS2
10	Pikmin 2	Nintendo	GC

(Updated 14/9/04)

Madden NFL 2005

Street Racing Syndicate



KONGETSU*

WITH JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT TIM ROGERS

"TAITO'S COCO CURRY ICHIBANYA IS PART OF THE ACTION-SIMULATION GENRE. SOME PEOPLE

I asked a friend of mine, who works for Sony, why she thinks the Xbox is failing in Japan: "The Japanese just don't like the Xbox. They don't like an American game system."

I found this explanation weak. It was weak as the Japanese curry we were eating at that moment in some dumpy little shack in Shitamachi. The curry was good – just weak. The closest Indian-run place (well, Sri-Lankan, at least) was a 15-minute walk away, and we were tired, so we settled for the Japanese stuff, all smooth and liquidy and soupy and salty. Let it be known, again and again, that the Japanese are not famous for their curry. Hell, they're not really famous for anything, except that they're famous for nothing and happily rob things from other cultures to patchwork their own.

"There's a game about making Japanese curry," my friend tried to tell me. "*CoCo Curry Ichibanya*. It's by Taito." Alongside *Yoshinoya Beef Bowl* (by Success, a developer who took too long to achieve its namesake, in my opinion), *CoCo* is part of the fast-growing restaurant action-simulation genre.

Some people say the games are as inane as train simulations. I say sit the hell down – they're fun. They have character. The *Yoshinoya* game stars a protagonist named Yoshino Gyuunosuke, with Gyuunosuke literally meaning 'Beefboy'. That's great stuff. They're bright, and colourful, and fast-moving, with wacky sounds and music, and quirky, kinky play systems.

My reply to my friend's comment ("There's a game about making Japanese curry," you may remember) came a minute and a paragraph late: "Well, Xbox has a game about shooting aliens. It's called *Halo 2*."

My friend swallowed some rice. "Japanese people don't care about *Halo 2*."

"Why not?" I've played the game, and I find it gorgeous. The execution is face-smackingly flawless. I'm qualified to ask the question.

"The Japanese don't play first-person shooters."

This is the explanation I got when I asked a Japanese journalist why his magazine had only given the genius *Metroid Prime* a six. "The Japanese don't play first-person shooters," that's what he said. He was the one who'd written the review.

"Do you play first-person shooters?" I asked him.

"Only when I have to," he replied.

"What about *Metroid Prime*? Did you play that?" His reply was a harsh "Nawwww."

My riposte to my friend's declaration about first-person shooters on that curry-soaked night came a moment late. I was

■ Japanese gamers really don't like *Halo*. They just… don't.



TEACH YOURSELF JAPANESE

LESSON TWENTY FOUR: INTRODUCING YOURSELF ON JAPANESE XBOX LIVE (REQUIRING AN XBOX LIVE STARTER KIT – ONLY ¥5,000)

Ore-sama Igirisu no yarou da	I am a damned British bastard
FisshuAndoChippu-mochitte yondeiinjayo	You may call me 'He who carries fish and chips'
Omaera no kuni no kudaranai himesama no zen'in wo mamoru mokuteki de kitanja	I have come to protect all of your country's damned princesses
Ore-sama no masshiroku hikatteru hada no mae ni SHINeeeZE!!	Die before my brilliantly shining white skin!
Anoune, dareka iruno? Moshi-mooooshi?	Uh, is anyone there? Helloooo?

FAST-GROWING RESTAURANT SAY IT'S INANE. I SAY IT'S FUN”

soaking up late moments that night. “Well, Americans didn't play them either… in 1986 or so.”

My friend scoffed. “They didn't even have videogames in 1986.” She was kidding, of course, but still making a point: that point being that she gets my point, if only tangentially.

I went on waving my chopsticks ('chopsticks, for curry?' you ask – it's to merely scoop up the curry-engorged rice and eat it, see), making declarations toward the rain. “Some games have this… undeniable something. *Halo 2* has an undeniable beauty about the play of it, one that anyone would understand if they'd just… play it.”

“You should work for Microsoft,” my friend mumbled. Then she said, “Well, what about the curry game? Do you think westerners would play something like that?”

I give it a moment's thought. My answer was definite, and earned me only a groan: “Only if it were about Indian curry.”

Kind regards



DROP 'EM

So the Xbox is cheap in Japan. For roughly a hundred pounds you can have an Xbox, a Live kit, the DVD remote, *Halo*, *Crimson Skies* and an extra controller. I must have mentioned this to you before. I mention it again because it's still true. And people still aren't buying it. Why not?

For starters, there's still no *Knights Of The Old Republic*. The Japanese like RPGs, right? “Japanese people wouldn't like it,” my Sony friend says. “They don't like RPGs where you kind of develop your own character's personality or alignment.”

Whatever, say I – what about *Ogre Battle* on Super Famicom? She waves this explanation away. “Come on, that was more popular among American wannabe otaku than Japanese people. You're the imperialists, the ones who want to take over nations – hell, you're the ones who want to save princesses, too.”

What are the Japanese, I ask, if not people who don't want to save princesses?

“You know, in *Fable*, you can be good or evil. You can get married, have kids. You can even be homosexual,” I say.

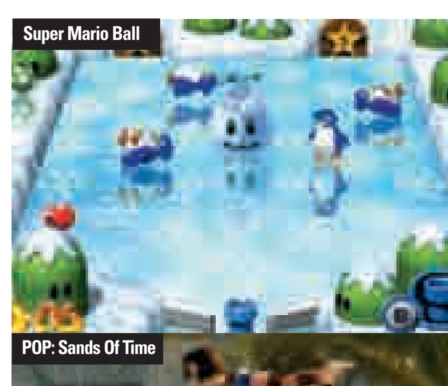
My friend speaks off-handedly, and sincerely. “So that's the evil path?”

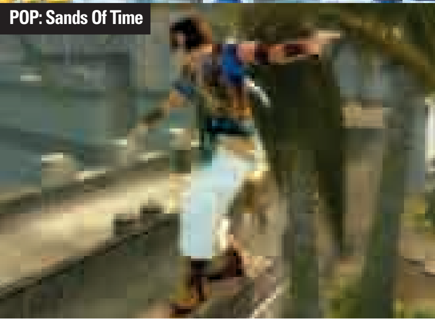
Yeah, that's another thing they might have to work on.

JAPANESE MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	World Soccer Winning Eleven 8	Konami	PS2
2	Suikoden IV	Konami	PS2
3	Dokodemo Issho: Toro to Ippai	SCEJ	PS2
4	Famicom Mini: Mario Bros. 2	Nintendo	GBA
5	Super Mario Ball	Nintendo	GBA
6	Pachinko Slot! Fist Of The North Star	Sammy	PS2
7	Prince Of Persia: Sands Of Time	SCEJ	PS2
8	FMA: Dream Carnival	Bandai	PS2
9	Jikkyo Power Pro Baseball 11	Konami	PS2
10	The Legend Of Stafy 3	Nintendo	GBA

(Week ending 5/9/04 © 2004 Media Create Co. Ltd. All Rights Reserved)


Super Mario Ball


POP: Sands Of Time

"WHETHER YOU SEE THE MONSTERS OR NOT SHOULD DEPEND ON A MAN'S HEART"
MASASHI TSUBOYAMA, KONAMI JAPAN

MASASHI TSUBOYAMA AND AKIRA YAMAOKA

KONAMI JAPAN

When it comes to the survival horror genre one series has become synonymous with psychological scares. Forget the lumbering zombies of *Resident Evil*, welcome to *Silent Hill*. Dark, menacing and – at times – just plain nasty, these games disturb on many levels. But you have to wonder what drives someone to create stone statues that leak blood, mutant babies or two-headed undead dogs.

"We have to admit that to create psychological games is actually quite difficult," says designer Masashi Tsuboyama. "There's a lot of thinking involved but it's worth it. Inspiration requires constant reflective thinking, it doesn't just come out. With lots of things around you and with that constant thinking, anything can be done. Although creating psychological fear is what we do, at the same time we feel that using direct scare elements is a much more direct way to appeal to the user because you get the reaction right away. With psychological fear, it just doesn't work that way. You have to look at the details extremely closely. It really is hard work."

The entire genre has been shifting of late, with the latest offering in the *Resident Evil* series doing away with its trademark zombies and introducing lunatic villagers and a host of other monsters. In a similar fashion, the latest game in the *Silent Hill* series – *Silent Hill 4: The Room* – takes a change in direction. Instead of featuring the sprawling town of Silent Hill as in the last three games, the action takes place inside a single room that houses portals to sub-worlds.

"The idea came when we wanted to make a sequel title after *Silent Hill 3* that would implement a lot of new tastes," explains Tsuboyama. "This is why we chose the single room idea – it would really show the contrast between the normal and the abnormal. For the scenario, we got the inspiration from a book called *Coin Locker Babies* [Ryu Murakami's twisted adventure of two teenagers in Tokyo]."

Konami will be hoping that such a dark influence will help it to recreate the success that it achieved with the second game, *Silent Hill 2: Restless Dreams*. "*Silent Hill 2* was easily our favourite in the series," the designers agree. "It had something that no other title around at that time had. It wasn't just a bunch of monsters coming in and the player having to fight them. It had a much more complex scenario than the others. Action-wise it may not have been that satisfying, but overall it's the title we were most pleased with."

Of course, violence in videogames is increasingly frowned upon and the survival horror genre is one of the main offenders when it comes to using controversial content as a means of luring its audience "You could say it's both creative and a means of promotion," comments Yamaoka. "But it's more to do with the creative side. You may say it's a level of violence, but we don't see it as violence because it isn't to us. When you're dealing with a horror title, it just has to be expressed that way." Regardless of whether the developers believe they are not deliberately creating violent games, restraints on studios are being tightened all the time, and scenes and sections of games are being cut.

"We almost got everything we wanted included in the games," Tsuboyama says, though they ran into trouble with *Silent Hill 4*… "Some elements and some of the creatures weren't allowed to appear outside in the real world," Tsuboyama explains. "The two-headed creatures, for instance – this generally wasn't well accepted by the public, so we had to make sure they only appeared in certain areas." "There were actually quite a few more scenes like that," adds Yamaoka. "If we could have implemented them as a work of art we could have used them and we were certain that the value of *Silent Hill 4* would have been increased."

So with a changing genre to work with, where do the men behind the scenes see themselves taking the series from here? "We know that we have lots of fans out there and we think about these fans, what they expect from us and what they'd enjoy," says Yamaoka. "We'll certainly be doing something different for the next game from what we have dealt with this time, a completely different theme maybe – it might not even be a horror title."

Silent Hill 4: The Room is out now on PS2, Xbox and PC and was reviewed in issue 22.



THE SILENT HILL SERIES HAS BEEN SCARING GAMERS ALL OVER THE GLOBE FOR YEARS. WE GOT AS CLOSE AS WE DARED TO TWO OF THE MINDS THE HELPED CREATE THESE NIGHTMARISH TITLES TO FIND OUT WHAT MAKES THEM TICK.

COMMUNITY

EVERY ISSUE, **games™** VISITS A DIFFERENT DEVELOPER. THIS MONTH, A SWIFT VISIT TO THE NETHERLANDS WAS IN ORDER…

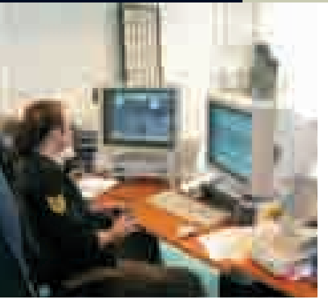


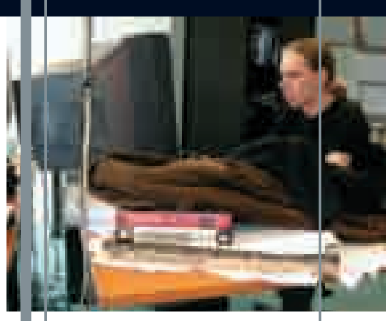
WITH JUST TWO GAMES TO ITS NAME (ONLY ONE OF WHICH HAS ACTUALLY BEEN RELEASED), GUERRILLA IS ALREADY NESTLED SAFELY UNDER SONY'S WING WITH AN EXCLUSIVE PLAYSTATION CONTRACT. **games™** GOES DUTCH TO FIND OUT MORE

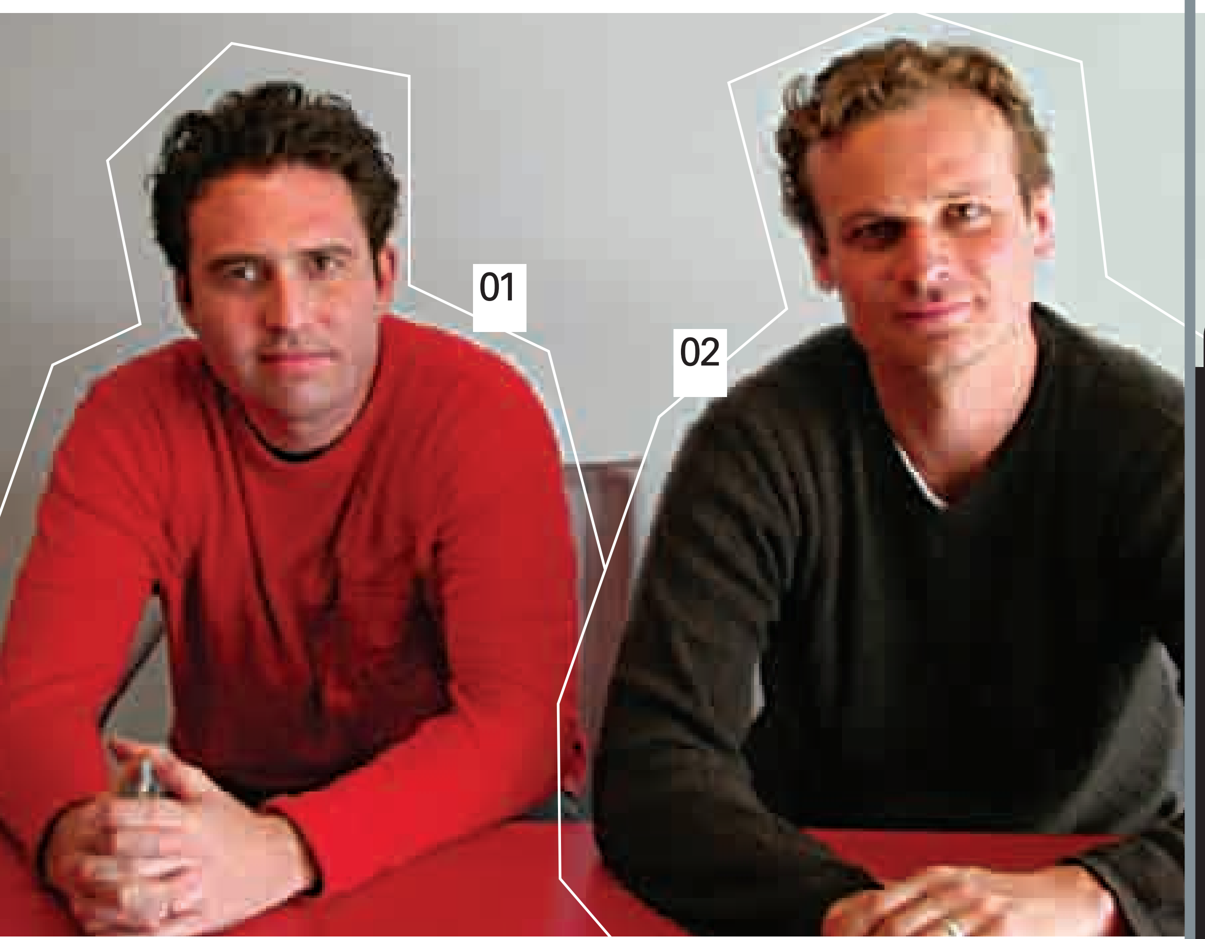
GUERRILLA

Direction, determination and drive – the three things that any up-and-coming developer needs when first setting foot into the choppy waters of the games industry. But when three small Amsterdam-based developers decided to merge under the banner of Lost Boys in 2000, one of those things was missing; without an idea of where the company was going in development terms, it could have all ended in tears. However, a string of minor achievements – mostly on the Game Boy – and some experience with the PlayStation2 were enough to jolt a major Dutch entertainment company into giving Lost Boys a helping hand. Media Republic gave the newly formed studio a fresh name – Guerrilla – and a mission with clear and specific objectives. "By engaging the best creative minds around and concentrating our work on the best technology currently available, we try to ensure our products' excellence in the two areas that really count in today's videogames market: quality and marketability," says Hermen Hulst, Guerrilla's managing director. "Nowadays it's impossible to confine the creative process to something purely artistic. It's sad to say, but the traditional aspects of the business have become an irreplaceable part of videogame making." This approach may sound disillusioned and cold, but it belies strong preparation and great passion, both of which have helped Guerrilla win an exclusive agreement with Sony's European gaming wing, SCEE. An impressive achievement for any company, let alone a fledgling developer.

Residing in the heart of Amsterdam, Guerrilla is perfectly placed to become yet another darling of European development.





MEET THE GUERRILLAS

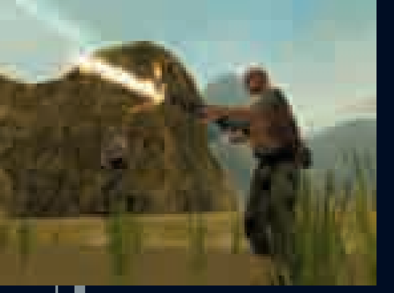
1 ARJAN BRUSSEE, DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, GUERRILLA
IN A NUTSHELL: Has worked as a programmer and game developer for over ten years. Was originally the head of Orange Games, one of the three founding companies of the original Lost Boys collective.

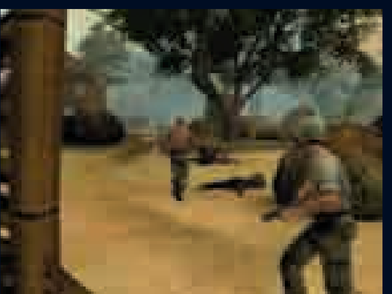
2 HERMEN HULST, MANAGING DIRECTOR, GUERRILLA
IN A NUTSHELL: Brings over eight years of business strategy and management experience to the Guerrilla team, having started out at Ubisoft in 1995. Was appointed at Guerrilla in July 2001.

Of course, the assumption here is that Sony has decided to make the most of Guerrilla's services purely on the basis of *Killzone* – the game that much of the media (though surprisingly not Sony) is calling the PS2's answer to *Halo*. However, to disregard Guerrilla's other efforts would be foolish. Gamers the world over might be focused on *Killzone*, but it's *Shellshock: 'Nam '67* that currently carries the company's reputation on its shoulders; if only because in the recent glut of Vietnam-based shooters, it stands out as one of the better examples. "We've strived to get the utmost realism, creating ground-breaking AI capable of obtaining credible behaviour in a war zone," says development director Arjan Brussee. "To test its efficiency we've created a virtual environment simulator, and each time we put two squads in the same set-up, we always got a different result." In fact, the squads will look for shelter using crevices, bunkers and trenches, organising themselves for sorties and choosing differing tactics according to the situation. As the game progresses, your credits will improve as will those of the enemy, who will become more astute and lethal. "In handling such a touchy subject we've not been afraid to raise controversies" admits Brussee. "We even thought of inserting original war reels in the game's presentation. It's strong material, raw at times, but it's all part of the underlying concept, which puts realism at the forefront." With the multiformat release of *Shellshock: 'Nam '67* now out of the way, it seems that Guerrilla's future appears to be set: the Dutch company will now only develop games for

> "**THE NEXT GENERATION** OF CONSOLES WILL BE **A DEVELOPMENT** THAT WILL ENABLE US TO MAKE FURTHER **INNOVATIONS IN GRAPHICS** AND STYLE"
> **HERMEN HULST, GUERRILLA**

Guerrilla's only flaw is that the hype for titles like *Killzone* has effectively set it up for a possible fall if the game turns out to be less than stellar. Here's hoping that doesn't happen.











Shellshock's vision of Vietnam is as graphic and brutal as they come.

THREE IN, ONE OUT

Part of the reason for Guerrilla's success is the support it received from Media Republic – a major Dutch company that focuses on next-generation entertainment, and is behind projects such as reality shows and soap operas. "Before joining the [Media Republic] group we tried to get funds from the Dutch government and the European Community, but in both cases the projects we submitted weren't thought interesting enough," explains Hermen Hulst. "But Media Republic has enabled us to start work, and thanks to this we've won an agreement with Sony." Media Republic's backing obviously means a great deal to Guerrilla – without it, who knows where the developer would be today – but the deal with Sony has proved an even bigger bonus. "[Media Republic] is one of the major groups in our country and we're proud to be a part of it," says Hulst, "though obviously we're even prouder of our partnership with the Japanese colossus."

Sony platforms, but getting here has required some adjustments. "We came to realise that in order to guarantee our future, it was necessary to make a radical change mentally so that we could face new challenges with renewed vigour and have a team ready for large-scale work," says Hulst. After a bit of company restructuring and the signing of the deal with Sony, Hulst says Guerrilla can now "work in absolute peace". This might sound odd to some – you're snuggled up with the company behind the most successful games machine on the planet and you don't feel any pressure? Apparently not. "We feel no sort of restriction whatsoever," explains Hulst. "Our partner leads the videogames market, and besides giving us ample creative freedom, it has enabled us to access important marketing resources and gives us the chance to make thorough research into new technologies. This allows us to plan our future investments with care. At present I wouldn't bet on PC and Xbox, but I'm pretty confident about PS2 and PS3. We know the Sony hardware very well, and because we've been developers for so many platforms for so long, we've learnt myriad tricks to bypass the machine's limitations successfully."

"IN ORDER TO GUARANTEE OUR FUTURE IT WAS NECESSARY TO MAKE A RADICAL CHANGE MENTALLY, SO THAT WE COULD FACE NEW CHALLENGES WITH RENEWED VIGOUR"

ARJAN BRUSSEE, GUERRILLA



This mention of the PS3 leads us nicely to the future. With the PlayStation2 already tamed, what new challenges will Guerrilla face when it comes to dealing with Sony's new machine? "The next-generation consoles will certainly see an enhancement in hardware, meaning more memory and processor capacity – we'll be able to make further innovations in graphics and style," says Hulst, thereby confirming that one of the mainstays of Guerrilla's work is a marked use of technology, always keeping a watchful eye on new findings. "We don't want our products to be considered simple style exercises, too dependent on technical innovations," Brussee explains, "but we also know that the very genres we concentrate on are the first to benefit from them. Our graphic engine has been created to give its best on PS2, revealing excellent polygon ranges and detailed textures. Today that very technology runs perfectly on PC and Xbox."

"GUERRILLA HAS **GROWN IMPRESSIVELY.** WITHIN 14 MONTHS THE **COMPANY HAS EXPANDED** FROM **52 TO 87** STAFF"

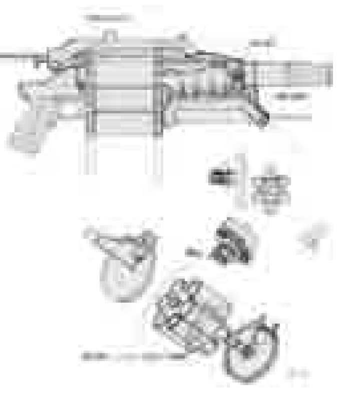
This confidence and drive may seem out of place with the tourist's-eye view of Amsterdam as a place for extreme relaxation, but Guerrilla has a strong international feel to it, with staff recruited from all over Europe and beyond. "It wasn't long before we realised that our domestic market didn't offer the talents we were looking for. In the Netherlands there are courses that teach how to develop computer products, but they don't give a specialised preparation in videogames. Today, thanks to the contacts we have with the best universities and arts academies, and a network of contacts that go from Amsterdam to Utrecht via Rotterdam, there are courses which effectively train people as programmers, designers

EVIL BY DESIGN

Concept art is always an important step of any development project, so it's no surprise that *Killzone* has more than enough detailed designs to go round. The impressive thing is how close the game replicates it…

and so on. But before this, we had to look to other countries, so our teams include Spanish, German, Greek and British staff." It's an interesting policy aimed at training new talents, which up to now has only been followed up in the States, where EA has sponsored a new videogame design course at the University of Southern California. "By hiring many foreigners we've had the chance to come up with a small statistic of our own," Hulst laughs, "and it has confirmed the notion that the best graphic designers, or technicians working on artistic aspects, all have Latin origins. On the other hand, the best coders are all from northern Europe. It's a bit like saying that creativity loves sunny weather…"

In little more than a year, Guerrilla has developed a new structure and grown impressively. Within 14 months the company has expanded from 52 to 87 staff – an impressive percentage. And as the influx of employees from around the world continues, Guerrilla's managers make sure the nations are united in their work. "Each team is made up of a variable number of members and is headed by a producer who supervises the various processing stages, be they artistic, coding or design," Hulst explains. "Because our workforce comes from so many different areas of Europe, we've gone to great lengths to make sure none of the work groups is exclusively Dutch, to avoid creating enclaves. The promotion of a strong team spirit has been so successful that the professional relations amongst the Guerrilla members carries on outside working hours." Ironic, perhaps, that such a harmonious sounding group of people are preparing to unleash *Killzone*'s carnage on the world. But then, it's always the quiet ones…



Guerrilla's attention to detail as far as the weapon design goes is pretty in-depth, combining current technology with futuristic styling.

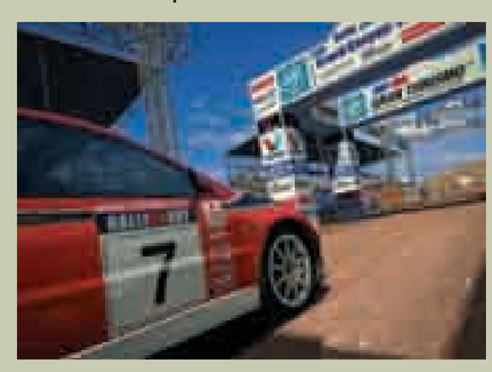


SAFETY IN NUMBERS

Guerrilla's deal with Sony isn't unique – indeed, the might behind the PlayStation brand already has more than a few companies up its sleeve to help produce games exclusively for its consoles…

POLYPHONY DIGITAL

Perhaps Sony's best-known exclusive developer, the Japan-based developer has built up its reputation entirely on the basis of *Gran Turismo*. Now into its fourth iteration, *GT4* is what every racing fan the world over is waiting for with baited breath. It is expected to arrive in 2005.



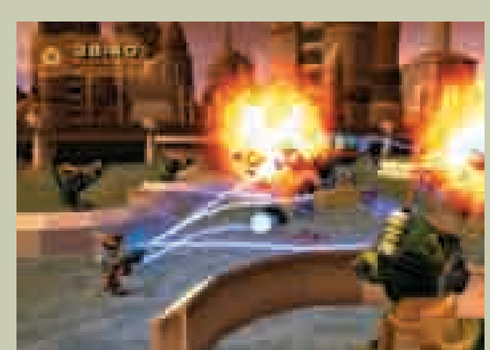
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS

Despite having started its days working on the N64 with *Rocket: Robot On Wheels* (which featured a disturbingly familiar raccoon-shaped bad guy), Sucker Punch now makes the *Sly Raccoon* series exclusively for the PlayStation2. *Sly 2: Band Of Thieves* is due for release in November.



INSOMNIAC GAMES

Since being founded in 1994, all of Insomniac's releases have been released exclusively for the PlayStation. Responsible for the first three games in the *Spyro The Dragon* series, the developer is now committed to producing *Ratchet & Clank* for Sony – the third instalment will be out in time for Christmas.



RELEASE LISTS



Destroy All Humans! Xbox Fantastic sights leap at you! It Came From Page 50!

Star Ocean: Till The End Of Time PS2 Wave goodbye to another hundred hours.

Metroid Prime 2: Echoes Cube Liked *Prime*? There's plenty more scanning where that came from…

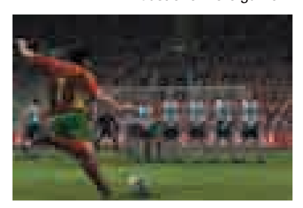
Def Jam: Fight For New York Xbox Hear me now. Page 108.



WINNING ELEVEN 8

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Konami

When a videogaming approximation of a sport can replace the real thing in conversations about goals, plays and saves, you know you're onto a winner. *Winning Eleven 8* does just that – in fact, we're amazed that we even managed to tear ourselves away to write this. Just one more game…



RAINBOW SIX 3: BLACK ARROW

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Ubisoft

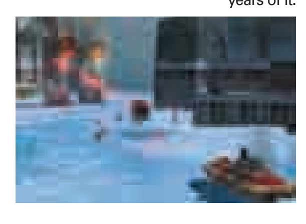
Tweaked and updated with a budget price to boot, one of the best games on Live just got better. The plethora of team-based and solo game modes should be enough to keep you and your clan entertained way into the new year.



STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

Format: PS2, PC, Xbox
Publisher: Activision

Simple, enjoyable and catering for all our *Star Wars* dreams, this game has put our broadband connection through hell trying to keep up with all the demand to slaughter Gungans. Lack of real single-player thrills aside, this has been well worth the wait – all 27 years of it.





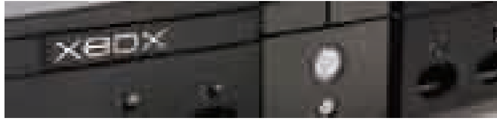
PLAYSTATION2

Month	Title	Publisher	
OCTOBER '04			
08 October	Rocky Legends	Ubisoft	
08 October	Def Jam: Fight For New York	Electronic Arts	
08 October	The Bard's Tale	Acclaim	
15 October	Steel Dragon EX	Midas	
22 October	Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	Rockstar	Wanted
22 October	Viewtiful Joe	Capcom	
22 October	Crimson Tears	Capcom	
22 October	Future Tactics: The Uprising	JoWood	
29 October	Knight Rider 2	Davilex	
29 October	Under The Skin	Capcom	
TBC	Dancing Stage Fusion	Konami	
TBC	Starsky & Hutch 2	Empire	
TBC	FIFA 2005	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Fight Club	Vivendi	
TBC	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	
TBC	Star Ocean: Till The End Of Time	Ubisoft	
TBC	Pro Evolution Soccer 4	Konami	Wanted
TBC	X-Men Legends	Activision	
TBC	TOCA Race Driver 2	Codemasters	
TBC	Leisure Suit Larry	Vivendi	
TBC	THUG 2: World Destruction Tour	Activision	
NOVEMBER '04			
05 November	Playboy: The Mansion	Ubisoft	
19 November	Mega Man X Command Mission	Capcom	
TBC	EyeToy: Play 2	Sony	Wanted
TBC	Killzone	Sony	
TBC	Call Of Duty: Finest Hour	Activision	
TBC	Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	
TBC	GoldenEye: Rogue Agent	Electronic Arts	
TBC	EyeToy: Antigrav	Sony	
Q4 '04			
TBC	Devil May Cry 3	Capcom	Wanted
TBC	Prince Of Persia 2	Ubisoft	Wanted
TBC	Capcom Fighting Jam	Capcom	
TBC	Gran Turismo 4	Sony	
TBC	Jak 3	Sony	
TBC	Cold Winter	Vivendi	
TBC	Get On Da Mic	Eidos	
TBC	Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Rockstar	
TBC	Sega Superstars	Sega	
TBC	WWX: Rumble Roses	Konami	
TBC	Ratchet And Clank 3	Sony	
TBC	The Red Star	Acclaim	
TBC	Sly 2: Band Of Thieves	Sony	
Q1 '05			
TBC	Shadow Of Rome	Capcom	Wanted
TBC	CT Special Forces: Fire For Effect	Hip Interactive	
TBC	Okami	Capcom	
TBC	Stolen	Hip Interactive	
TBC	Resident Evil Outbreak: File 2	Capcom	
TBC	The Nightmare Before Christmas	Capcom	
TBC	The Getaway: Black Monday	Sony	
TBC	Tak 2: The Staff Of Dreams	THQ	
TBC	Far Cry Instinct	Ubisoft	
TBC	Metal Gear Solid 3	Konami	Wanted
TBC	Brothers In Arms	Ubisoft	
TBC	Battlefield: Modern Combat	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Viewtiful Joe 2	Capcom	
TBC	Monster Hunter	Capcom	



GAMECUBE

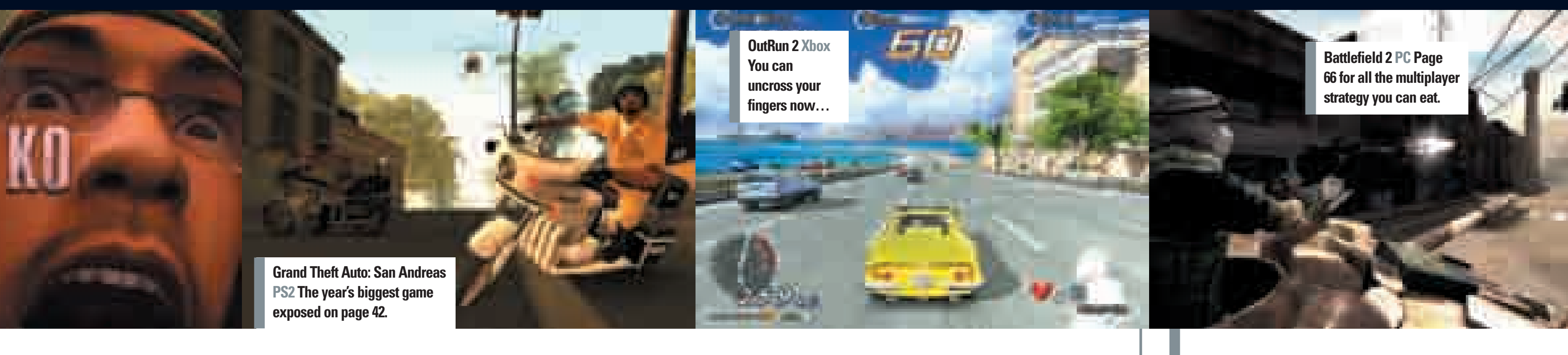
Month	Title	Publisher	
OCTOBER '04			
08 October	Def Jam: Fight For New York	Electronic Arts	
08 October	Pikmin 2	Nintendo	Wanted
15 October	Donkey Konga	Nintendo	
22 October	Future Tactics: The Uprising	JoWood	
TBC	X-Men Legends	Activision	
TBC	Starsky & Hutch 2	Empire	
TBC	FIFA 2005	Electronic Arts	
TBC	THUG 2: World Destruction Tour	Activision	
NOVEMBER '04			
12 November	Paper Mario 2	Nintendo	
12 November	Tales Of Symphonia	Namco	Wanted
19 November	Mega Man X Command Mission	Capcom	
26 November	Metroid Prime 2: Echoes	Nintendo	Wanted
26 November	Neighbours From Hell	JoWood	
TBC	GoldenEye: Rogue Agent	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	
Q4 '04			
TBC	Mario Party 6	Nintendo	
TBC	Zelda: Four Swords Adventure	Nintendo	
TBC	Prince Of Persia 2	Ubisoft	Wanted
Q1 '05			
TBC	Resident Evil 4	Capcom	Wanted
TBC	Mario Tennis	Nintendo	
TBC	Tak 2: The Staff Of Dreams	THQ	
TBC	Viewtiful Joe 2	Capcom	Wanted
TBC	Killer 7	Capcom	Wanted



XBOX

Month	Title	Publisher
OCTOBER '04		
08 October	Rocky Legends	Ubisoft
08 October	Def Jam: Fight For New York	Electronic Arts
08 October	The Bard's Tale	Acclaim
22 October	Future Tactics: The Uprising	JoWood

CALM YOUR FEVERISH ANTICIPATION WITH OUR COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF FORTHCOMING RELEASES



Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas PS2 The year's biggest game exposed on page 42.

OutRun 2 Xbox You can uncross your fingers now…

Battlefield 2 PC Page 66 for all the multiplayer strategy you can eat.

29 October	Street Fighter Anniversary Collection	Capcom	Wanted
TBC	X-Men Legends	Activision	
TBC	Starsky & Hutch 2	Empire	
TBC	Leisure Suit Larry	Vivendi	
TBC	Fable	Microsoft	
TBC	THUG 2: World Destruction Tour	Activision	
TBC	Fight Club	Vivendi	
TBC	Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly	Ubisoft	
TBC	OutRun 2	Sega	Wanted
TBC	Pro Evolution Soccer 4	Konami	Wanted
TBC	Metal Slug 3	Ignition	
NOVEMBER '04			
05 November	Playboy: The Mansion	Ubisoft	
11 November	Halo 2	Microsoft	Wanted
TBC	Call Of Duty: Finest Hour	Activision	
TBC	Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	
Q4 '04			
TBC	Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Rockstar	
TBC	Operation Flashpoint	Codemasters	
TBC	The Red Star	Acclaim	
TBC	Forza Motorsport	Microsoft	
TBC	Capcom Fighting Jam	Capcom	
TBC	Blinx 2: Masters Of Time And Space	Microsoft	
TBC	GoldenEye: Rogue Agent	Electronic Arts	
Q1 '05			
TBC	Doom 3	Activision	
TBC	Battlefield: Modern Combat	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Brothers In Arms	Ubisoft	
TBC	Dead Or Alive Ultimate	Microsoft	Wanted
TBC	Pariah	Hip Interactive	
TBC	Far Cry Instinct	Ubisoft	
TBC	CT Special Forces: Fire For Effect	Hip Interactive	
TBC	Sid Meier's Pirates!	Atari	Wanted
TBC	Tak 2: The Staff Of Dreams	THQ	
TBC	Unreal Championship 2: The Liandri Conflict	Midway	
TBC	Jade Empire	Microsoft	Wanted



PC

Month	Title	Publisher	
OCTOBER '04			
08 October	Pacific Fighters	Ubisoft	
08 October	Cossacks 2: Napoleonic Wars	CDV	
08 October	Sudden Strike: Resource Wars	CDV	
15 October	Medieval Lords	Digital Jesters	
22 October	Future Tactics: The Uprising	JoWood	
29 October	Knight Rider 2	Davilex	
TBC	Starsky & Hutch 2	Empire	
TBC	Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Leisure Suit Larry	Vivendi	
TBC	FIFA 2005	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Pro Evolution Soccer 4	Konami	Wanted
TBC	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	
TBC	THUG 2: World Destruction Tour	Activision	
NOVEMBER '04			
05 November	Playboy: The Mansion	Ubisoft	
TBC	Children Of The Nile	Sega	
TBC	Medal Of Honor: Pacific Assault	Electronic Arts	
Q4 '04			
TBC	Football Manager 2005	Sega	
TBC	Men Of Valor	Vivendi	
TBC	Advent Rising	Majesco	
TBC	Tribes Vengeance	Vivendi	
TBC	The Matrix Online	Warner Bros	Wanted
TBC	Sid Meier's Pirates!	Atari	Wanted
TBC	Half-Life 2	Vivendi	Wanted
Q1 '05			
TBC	Duke Nukem Forever	Vivendi	
TBC	Bet On Soldier	Digital Jesters	
TBC	UFO: Aftershock	Cenega	
TBC	Pariah	Hip Interactive	
TBC	Brothers In Arms	Ubisoft	
TBC	CT Special Forces: Fire For Effect	Hip Interactive	

GAME BOY ADVANCE

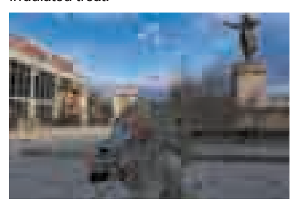
Month	Title	Publisher	
OCTOBER '04			
08 October	Finding Nemo: Continuing Adventures	THQ	
29 October	Hamtaro: Rainbow Rescue	Nintendo	
TBC	Metal Slug Advance	Ignition	Wanted
TBC	THUG 2: World Destruction Tour	Activision	
TBC	FIFA 2005	Electronic Arts	
TBC	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	
NOVEMBER '04			
12 November	Zelda: Minish Cap	Nintendo	Wanted
19 November	Mario Vs Donkey Kong	Nintendo	
26 November	Super Mario Ball	Nintendo	
TBC	Banjo Pilot	THQ	
Q4 '04			
TBC	Mario Party Advance	Nintendo	
TBC	Banjo Pilot	THQ	
Q1 '05			
TBC	Pokémon Emerald	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Kingdom Hearts: Chain Of Memories	Buena Vista	Wanted
TBC	Boktai 2: Solar Boy Django	Konami	
TBC	Donkey Kong: King Of Swing	Nintendo	
TBC	Tak 2: The Staff Of Dreams	THQ	

PLEASE NOTE: While every effort has been made to ensure these dates are correct at the time of going to press, they are liable to change at short notice. Which is completely beyond our control, so don't go giving us evils.



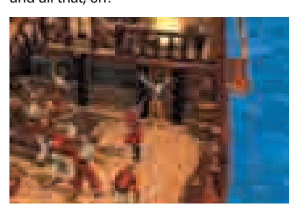
S.T.A.L.K.E.R. SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL

Format: PC
Publisher: THQ
GSC's post-nuclear first-person shooter seems to have developed an annoying tendency to keep slipping just when it gets within spitting distance. But if what we've seen so far is a fair reflection of the finished product, we could be in for an irradiated treat.



SID MEIER'S PIRATES!

Format: PC, Xbox
Publisher: Atari
While we should be knocking back grog by the end of the year in the PC version, news that the Xbox owners will also get their hands on this title in 2005 should be enough to help us forget all about that most landlubbing of buccaneers, Captain Rhama. Still, avast and all that, eh?



PLAYSTATION PORTABLE

Format: PSP
Publisher: Sony
As more and more information reaches us from Japan, we can't help feel that the PSP is going to be the must-have item of 2005. Hell, just the prospect of playing *Winning Eleven* on the bus is enough to get us to put aside a couple of hundred pounds any day of the week. Well, any day we've got some spare cash…





THE PEOPLE IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY TELL IT LIKE IT IS…



MAKING A SHOW TO MAKE GAMERS PROUD

The television industry has never really understood games. A TV executive once told me that he didn't want to air any shows about videogaming on his network because he thought it was unhealthy to sit and stare at a TV screen all day. "Playing games is something you do instead of getting some fresh air," he observed. Quite how he thinks his audience watches his shows eludes me, but the fact remains that TV types seem to think games are the preserve of pale, spotty teenagers.

But within the games industry, as well as the media in general, it's been observed that boy gamers grow up to become men gamers. Gaming is no longer something that people 'grow out of'. As a result, many games are now targeted at this older, more sophisticated player. By contrast, most gaming programmes are still aimed at teenage boys – magazine shows filled with superficial features, tacky competitions and feeble attempts at humour. A world away from the 20-something sophisticate that PS2 and Xbox product managers dream about.

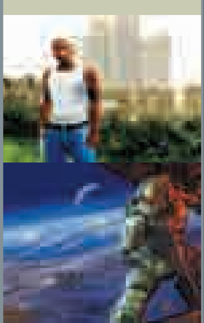
It's not just the audience that's evolving. *Walking With Dinosaurs*, *Big Brother* and *Test The Nation* were created by producers who took the opportunity offered by developments in technology to create unique, ground-breaking shows. Game technology can be harnessed in exactly the same way to create shows that use interactivity, simulation, animation and fantasy in ways nobody has thought of before.

Gamer.tv recognises that times are changing. *When Games Attack* is a show for the gaming cognoscenti, for people who have grown up with games and love them just as much as films or music. Hopefully, it will help set the standard for videogames TV to come and change a few perceptions.

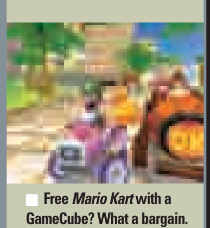
IAN SHARPE, DEVELOPMENT PRODUCER, GAMER.TV

FROM THE FRONT

SONY AND MICROSOFT REAP THE REWARDS OF PRICE CUTS, WHILE ATI SAYS ITS CHIPS ARE NEARLY READY



Big upcoming releases have also helped sales.



Free *Mario Kart* with a GameCube? What a bargain.

CONSOLE SALES GO THROUGH THE ROOF AS PRICES ARE SLASHED

BARGAIN HUNT

It looks like the recent console price cuts have done their job and have resulted in huge sales for both Sony and Microsoft. In the week following the Xbox's price slash to £99.99 the amount of units sold tripled (seeing the week's sales move towards a staggering 15,000), while the PS2's sales shot up by a huge 93 per cent after just three days at its new £104.99 price tag.

It's doubtful that this boost in sales will stop here, though. A quick glance at the Xbox's planned software line-up for the months leading up to Christmas show many strong titles that are bound to entice the public to part with their cash due to the lower price of the console.

But it's not good news for everyone. The high-street big boys may be taking full advantage of these price cuts by bundling together games and consoles at 'all-time-low' prices, but independent retailers are struggling. The £104.99 price of the PS2 in particular is proving difficult to advertise and some indies are being forced to drop the price to the more visually appealing £99 mark simply to shift stock.

Unfair it may be, but Sony's choice of price was a clever one. It undoubtedly knew that many high-street retailers would simply drop the price themselves and take a loss on the hardware in order to make sales, keeping the PS2 selling in the run-up to Christmas.

Not to be outdone, though, Nintendo is answering these price cuts with campaigns

Microsoft and Nintendo have worked with ATI.



ATI HINTS AT COMPLETION OF XBOX 2 GRAPHICS UNIT

ONE STEP CLOSER…

Reports from New York last month suggested that ATI, the company working on developing the new graphics unit for the Xbox 2, is nearing completion of the project.

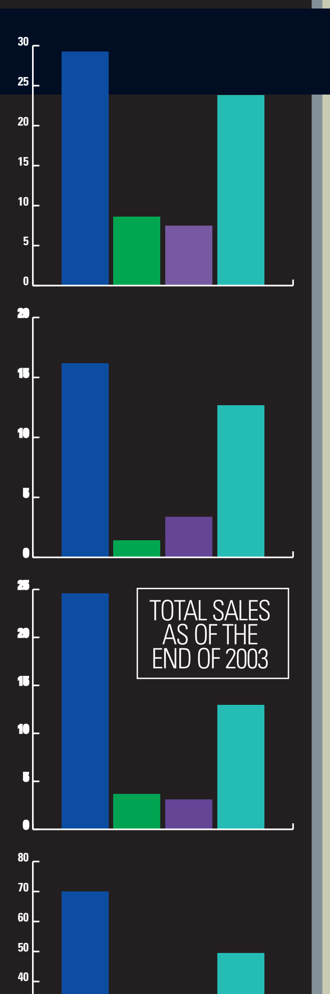
While speaking at the Smith Barney Citigroup 2004 Technology Conference, Terry Nickerson, CFO of ATI Technologies, said: "We're actually winding down development on some of the Microsoft product. Both Nintendo and Microsoft will be royalties."

Although his vague comment could obviously mean many things, speculation is rife that his reference to Microsoft means the graphics chips for Xbox 2 will soon be making their way into the Xbox 2 manufacturing process. With the machine supposedly hitting the shelves in the US at the end of 2005, the timing is about right and things look to be on track.

The end of the statement also confirms what we were all pretty sure of anyway; both Nintendo and Microsoft will just be licensing technology from ATI and manufacturing it themselves. It's a predictable move from Nintendo, which has gone about things this way with every console to date, but for Microsoft – which bought huge amounts of technology when releasing the Xbox – it's a sign that the company is determined to get things right.

…of its own. Although there are no plans at the moment to cut the cost of standalone GameCube packs, gamers will be able to buy a GameCube bundled with *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!* for just £79.99. As we went to press, Nintendo also announced that the price of the GBA SP is to be dropped to a mere £69.99.

However, despite being the cheapest console on the market, Nintendo's GameCube hasn't been selling nearly as well as it should have – and that was before any price cuts took place. With PS2s and Xboxes selling more than ever, could we be about to witness Nintendo falling further behind the crowd?



North America
- PlayStation2 – 29.26 million
- Xbox – 8.6 million
- GameCube – 7.46 million
- GBA – 23.78 million

Japan/Asia
- PlayStation2 – 16.18 million
- Xbox – 1.4 million
- GameCube – 3.37 million
- GBA – 12.66 million

Europe/PAL
- PlayStation2 – 24.56 million
- Xbox – 3.7 million
- GameCube – 3.11 million
- GBA – 12.98 million

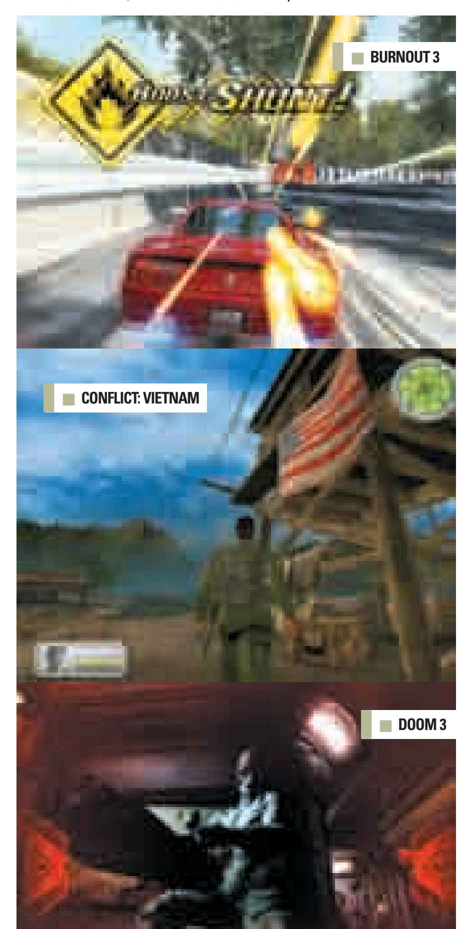
Worldwide
- PlayStation2 – 70 million
- Xbox – 13.7 million
- GameCube – 13.94 million
- GBA – 49.42 million

UK MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Burnout 3: Takedown	EA Games	Multi
2	Conflict: Vietnam	SCi	Multi
3	Shellshock: Nam '67	Eidos	Multi
4	Driv3r	Atari	Multi
5	Spider-Man 2	Activision	Multi
6	Driv3r	Atari	Multi
7	Shrek 2	Activision	Multi
8	Doom 3	Activision	PC
9	Headhunter: Redemption	Sega	Multi
10	Athens 2004	SCEE	PS2

No real surprise to see *Burnout 3: Takedown* leap into the top of the chart, although SCi will no doubt still be chuffed with second place for *Conflict: Vietnam*. Personally, we're more than pleased that Sega's *Headhunter: Redemption* makes an appearance too.

All information is compiled by ChartTrack and is the strict copyright of Elspa (UK) Ltd. UK Entertainment Software Sales Charts (Full Price, All Formats) (w/e 11 September 2004)



LOOK TO THE FUTURE

TAKE 2 RELEASES FINANCIAL RESULTS

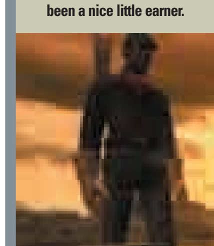
Publisher Take 2 Interactive has revealed its financial figures for the third quarter of 2004, showing a $14.4 million loss – but with *GTA: San Andreas* on the way, things are already looking up.

The company's loss translates to a 32-cent loss per share. However, the firm's Q3 revenues of $160.9 million easily outshine last year's $152.1 million figure. Enjoyable western romp *Red Dead Revolver* has been Take 2's most successful title over the last three months, responsible for about 22 per cent of this quarter's revenue, while the next largest distributed title, *ESPN NFL 2K5*, brought in roughly 13 per cent of revenue.

The figures from last quarter are not the main focus, though. All eyes are now looking towards the next quarter, which will see the release of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* on 29 October – a week later than originally thought.

No doubt Take 2's financial year will be ending with some big numbers, and close to 25 per cent of the full year's revenues will come from the title, which is expected to ship 4.5 million units on the day of release to deal with the huge pre-order figures already outstripping those for *Vice City*.

Red Dead Revolver has been a nice little earner.




CAP-10
PUNISHER x1
491301
GAULLEE
x2



Had enough yet? **The Punisher Arcade [Capcom] 1993**

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS



■ Cruising the majestic Vegas-inspired Las Ventura for the first time is a moment to savour.

"CJ ISN'T A HIRED THUG AND HIS MOTIVATIONS AND REWARDS ARE OFTEN MORE COMPLEX THAN JUST CASH"

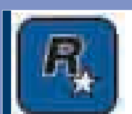
ROCKSTAR PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

REPRESENTIN' DAWG

GTA: VICE CITY - SCARFACE + BOYZ 'N THE HOOD = GTA: SAN ANDREAS

■ Your homeboy, chillin' in his 'crib'. Sit down, have a cup of tea while laughing and talking of memories past.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Once called DMA Design, Edinburgh-based Rockstar North was formed in September 1999 when Rockstar's parent company, Take 2, bought the studio. Five years on and Rockstar North has cemented its status as one of the most important developers in the world, and now embarks on its biggest project to date – *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*.

HISTORY

- MANHUNT 2003 [Multi]
- GTA: VICE CITY 2002 [Multi]
- GRAND THEFT AUTO III 2001 [Multi]

DOMINO, MUTHAF**KA

PS2 **Another month, another *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* preview.** But with good reason: this is going to be the biggest game of the year, and with the passing of each month more interesting facts, revelations and screenshots are unearthed. In our previous previews, we described the sheer scale of San Andreas, pointing out how you could drive all the way through this massive state without ever waiting for loading times. We showed you the Orange-hued Los Santos and the serene, open countryside. We revealed burger bars, tractors, barbershops, tattoo parlours, BMX bikes and protagonist CJ's expanding waistline… yet we're nowhere near done peeling away the many layers of this massive game.

As time goes on, the size of San Andreas becomes even more astounding. We cannot emphasise this enough – this place is enormous. Next to Los Santos and its Los Angeles-inspired city and ghetto areas, are the cities of San Fierro and Las Ventura. San Fierro is basically San Francisco except it's not geographically correct, as Jeff Castaneda, PR director for Rockstar North, explains. "While we've taken landmarks from the real cities, we haven't recreated them exactly," he says. "Real cities weren't made to be fun in a videogame, so while we've taken the fun parts of them, we've adapted the design to be more fun within a game context". So as with the way in which the 'Vinewood' sign and its interpretation of the Hollywood walk of fame area has been worked into Los Santos, expect to see San Francisco's trademark rolling hills and Golden Gate bridge when car-jacking your way around San Fierro – just not in any geographical context.

As you may have guessed, Las Ventura is a take on everyone's favourite dazzling cesspool of crime, greed and corruption, Las Vegas. As with the other cities, all the expected elements are in place, just not necessarily authentically. As you enter the city's strip, you're greeted with an abundance of flashing lights and casinos with pink flamingos. Of the three cities in the game, Las Ventura is without a doubt the most graphically impressive and by far the most immediately stunning.

With *San Andreas*, it's not about square mileage, but getting the content correct as well. Cities are not only unique, but boast plenty of variation within their boundaries. Creating an area the size of San Andreas,– populating it with people, networks of roadways and complex missions, then squeezing it all on one disc and making it so you never have to wait for any loading times is an achievement in itself. However, the developer hasn't stopped at creating the widest gaming landscape ever seen, it's set out to make the most detailed and authentic. And the result is truly worthy of the *Grand Theft Auto* name.

As any good tour guide will tell you, a big, pretty city is useless without things to do. So once you've tired of driving around, getting lost and looking at spectacular cityscapes, you can get involved with some missions. Taking on the role of Carl Johnson (CJ to his chums), a man returning to the hood to attend the funeral of his mother who was the unlucky victim of a few stray drive-by bullets, you're immediately thrown into the thick of the ▷

PIMP ME, BABY, ONE MORE TIME

As well as eating, grooming and tattooing, you can rethink CJ's appearance and dress him up in suit jackets, sunglasses and, er, leather pants, all in much the same way as a wrestling game's Create A Character mode. Once you've got the clothes, you need the car. Steal any auto you want and take it to a workshop to fit it with a bigger exhaust, new paintjob and trims, plus other crucial items like hydraulics to make your car bounce like something from a Snoop Dogg video. Finally, drive to your nearest karate dojo to learn some new moves; moves you can put to good use defending yourself, or when some redneck catches you robbing his house.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2, PC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games
DEVELOPER: Rockstar North
RELEASE: 29 Oct (PC version, 2005)
GENRE: Action/ Adventure
PLAYERS: 1-2 (TBC)

■ *Grand Theft Auto* goes to 'da hood'. Pull off drive-bys, join a gang and wear its colours, fight for control of territory and pop many caps in many asses. "*San Andreas* is in the mutha f**kin' hizz-ouse, bee-yatch!" Or so we're told.

"THERE'S SO MUCH MORE TO BE REVEALED – THERE'S EVEN TALK OF A TOP-SECRET TWO-PLAYER MODE"



■ Expect Elvis wannabes to appear like angels in the Las Ventura casinos.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS [CONT.]

action. Attending your mum's funeral, you and your 'homies' are shot at by a rival gang, pulling another one of their popular drive-by shootings. Subsequently, you and your crew are required to dodge bullets and escape back to the safety of your hood on your, er, BMX bikes. Naturally, revenge is in order, so when the opportunity arises you and your gang of misfits grab a car and drive on down to return the flurry of bullets.

Once these 'crackers' are gunned down and CJ has settled into the gangsta way of life, it's time to start your own gang and take over other gang-controlled areas of Los Santos. Where previous *GTA* games have taken players into a world of organised crime in which they must climb the ladder, *San Andreas* is a street-level narrative, telling a similar story to the likes of *Boyz N The Hood*, *Menace II Society* and other such ghetto-based tales. In order to start your gang you need respect and to get respect you need to steal an area from a rival gang. Armed with a shotgun, knuckleduster and whatever curious collection of weaponry you have to hand, simply guide CJ to the nearest gang territory (denoted by a flashing square of colour on your map) and take them all down until the area is yours.

In combat you use the new *Manhunt*-inspired targeting system, where you can lock on to your enemies and strafe around while taking shots at their heads. The *Manhunt* system is also used for stealth purposes. On one mission we experienced, CJ was hired to rescue Chinese prisoners from a boat in San Fierro harbour. After circling and taking a out a few baddies from the comfort of a helicopter before diving out and swimming over to the boat, you're required to sneak your way around the vessel, creeping up on guards and knifing them without alerting their colleagues. Should you get spotted or tire of the silence of knifeplay, choosing to give your Uzi a warm-up, it's back to the targeting system, where CJ runs about, gunning down his enemies while blurting out expletives and one-liners.

"WITH EACH MONTH, THE SHEER SIZE OF SAN ANDREAS BECOMES EVEN MORE ASTOUNDING. THIS PLACE IS ENORMOUS"

Back on dry land, after you've employed your targeting system for a bit of Rambo-esque one-man-army bravado, you finally gain the rival gang's turf and, of course, the respect you desire. Now you can recruit a crew. As you progress, you and your posse will mercilessly gun down many more rival gang members, earning you more respect and thus the ability to recruit more people. Having a crew to hand is always useful – when embarking on other quests, any gang members travelling with you will automatically target any rival gang members they see, taking the odd shot at them if they're close enough. For the most part, though, this remains merely amusing intimidation, with your passengers choosing to simply lean out and over the car just to point their gun and look hard.

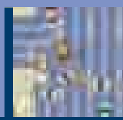
There's so much going on in *San Andreas*, there's even talk of a top-secret two-player mode. We want it now. We're sick of waiting and being given little bits of it, only to be told to go away and patiently wait for more. We need *GTA: San Andreas* – it's going to be by far the best *GTA* game yet, and there wasn't a beaten prostitute in sight. Now that's progress for you.

MO' MONEY, MO' PROBLEMS

Money plays a big part in *San Andreas*. Without it you can't buy clothes, food or customise your car. Of course, you can complete missions to earn cash, but there are other ways. You can tool yourself up and borrow a van to burgle a few homes. Often those you're stealing from are in when you arrive, so you can kill them before clearing out their houses. Or you can hit the Las Ventura casinos and try to win money by flirting with lady luck. You can play a variety of games such as roulette, blackjack, craps and slot machines – just be careful not to become addicted, otherwise you'll end up robbing people to fund your gambling habit, and that's no kind of life, even in a videogame.



Holding someone at gunpoint while robbing their house is just one moment where the *Manhunt*-style locking-on reveals itself.



FRANCHISE PROFILE

■ Released for the PSone in 1997 the original *Grand Theft Auto* wowed punters with the top-down antics of a car-jacker working his way up the crime ladder. Going fully 3D in 2001 with *Grand Theft Auto III*, the games immersed players in the action and 7 million copies later became one of the most successful franchises in history.

HISTORY

- **GRAND THEFT AUTO 2** 1999 [PSone]
- **GRAND THEFT AUTO LONDON** 1999 [PSone]
- **GRAND THEFT AUTO** 1997 [PSone]

■ The aptly named Victim stores are where CJ buys his threads. Get him leather pants – go on, do it.

"YOUR CLOTHES AND YOUR HAIRCUT ARE IMPORTANT FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE RESPECT THOSE AROUND YOU SHOW TOWARDS YOU"
ROCKSTAR PRESS RELEASE

■ Bustin' some caps: note crucial horizontal slant to the way the 'gangbangers' are holding their guns.

ODDWORLD STRANGER

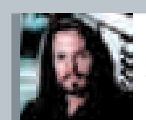


While most all-out action is first-person, the option is there to play the game your way.

"ONE THING THAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT TO US IS AI WITNESSING – WE WANT THE OTHER CHARACTERS TO FEEL LIKE YOU'RE IN THAT WORLD AND THEY'RE AWARE OF YOU"
LORNE LANNING, ODDWORLD INHABITANTS

Environments are both beautiful and insanely detailed, really immersing you in the game world.

ODDWORLD STRANGER
XBOX/MULTIFORMAT



CREATOR PROFILE
■ In his 15 years in the industry, Lorne Lanning has risen from being a lowly artist and animator to holding a position on the board of directors for The Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences and becoming president of Oddworld Inhabitants, one of the world's most creative developers.

HISTORY
■ **MUNCH'S ODDYSEE** 2002 [Xbox]
■ **ABE'S EXODDUS** 1998 [PSone]
■ **ABE'S ODDYSEE** 1997 [PSone]

PUTTING THE 'WILD' BACK INTO WILD WEST

Odd: (adj) Unusual or unexpected; strange. It's as though the dictionary knew what to expect of *Stranger* even before the gaming press got a glimpse of Oddworld Inhabitants' fourth title. New settings, new characters and a factory-sized chunk of new ideas (as well as sizeable helpings of animal cruelty and humour) await those willing to disobey their parents and play with *Stranger*. Those in search of Mudokons to rescue or platforming thrills, on the other hand, need not apply…

At a glance, you'd be forgiven for thinking the headline on this page was perhaps a misprint – *Stranger* distances itself from its heritage visually as much as it does with a distinct lack of Mudokons. A shame, perhaps, but there's only so many times you can hear the little guys mutter 'follow me' or 'wait' without thinking that maybe there's more to *Oddworld* than Simon Says. "What we wanted was a break," says Lorne Lanning, creator of the franchise, co-founder of Oddworld Inhabitants and a man far more down to earth than his twisted visions may suggest. "We wanted a fresh start to pioneer some other territory on the planet of Oddworld."

Taking us through the early stages of the game, Lanning reveals that if we dig a little deeper, the odd will out. The opening village has all the hallmarks of a traditional wild west settlement – until, that is, the townsfolk mosey on out to play. The chicken-like Clakkerz gibber away to themselves and each other relentlessly, but as you're the stranger in town they don't take kindly to you meddling in their affairs. "Any time you press the GameSpeak button, it's all context sensitive," explains Lanning, going on to demonstrate just how varied the reactions of villagers can be.

"One thing that's really important to us is AI witnessing – we want the other characters to feel and act like you're in that world and they're aware of you," he continues, making the chicken-like Clakkerz very aware of his presence by attacking them until they run into their homes and hide. Some even hurl obscenities out the window, coming out with gems like, "We're coming out now so you be a good boy and behave yourself, you hear?" before returning to the streets, confirming beyond all doubt that the *Oddworld* spirit is alive and well. In fact, the Alive system (Aware Lifeforms In Virtual Entertainment) that's at the core of each *Oddworld* title has never been so apparent as it is here. Sadly for some, this wanton chicken choking may not be the last of the RSPCA-baiting elements that *Stranger* offers…

"The main hook on this game is the live ammo," Lanning tells us, and when he says 'live', he means it. "Your character has a bow – he doesn't like guns, so what he does instead is use these little shockers." The 'shockers' are Zappflies, a living and endless source of stun ammo, and while these aren't the only form of weaponry you'll get to use, they're pivotal in catching the rest of your living projectiles. Each can be found in the wild, then stunned and used to tackle situations as you choose, catering for the stealthy, the gung-ho and even those who like to make a mess.

"There are a number of hazards like these big industrial fans," Lanning says, ▷

WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE

The first part of the game is entirely based around collecting bounties, and the underlying system that governs it is simple yet effective. Every enemy is worth a small sum of cash if you can suck them up into your Acme bounty vacuum thingy (a physics-mocking device that even Blinx would be proud to wield) and you'll get more pennies if you bring the varmints in breathing. "The Alive value of a bounty is really their difficulty level and you're encouraged to [collect] bounty alive rather than dead," creator Lorne Lanning explains, though this only really applies to boss bounties as the difference for grunts is mere loose change. As the game progresses, however, there'll be a slew of bounties to choose from, each with their own strengths and weaknesses.

DETAILS
FORMAT: Xbox, PS2
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER: Oddworld Inhabitants
RELEASE: Q1 '05
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

■ Trade platform thrills for bounty kills as Stranger earns bags of cash by taking down and sucking up every dang varmint that stands in his way. He's good like that.

> "CLAIMING A BOUNTY BASED ON A BUCKET FULL OF INNARDS IS NOT THE DONE THING"



■ Work out how to take a big bounty alive and you'll be swimming in cash in no time.

■ Sometimes a fist in the face might be your only option. It's still a lot of fun, though…

ODDWORLD STRANGER [CONT.]

proceeding to lay down a trail of annoying Chip-punks that coax a clueless foe right to the edge of the death trap before a blast from a shotgun-esque ThudSlug sees him thrown in and torn to shreds. "Doesn't it feel good to do that?" fellow Oddworld Inhabitant Dave Ross chips in, and much as our conscience may try to argue, he's right. Unsurprisingly, claiming a bounty based on a bucket full of innards is not the done thing, but while it may leave you out of pocket the satisfaction of a well-planned execution is its own reward, much like in Midway's *Psi-Ops*.

Without any preconceptions of realism, *Stranger* features a simple binary stealth system – long grass and similar environmental cover grant obvious and simple hiding places from which to rain down hot-blooded doom upon your unsuspecting foes, and you're never in any doubt as to whether you can be seen

ODD ENOUGH TO EAT

We've only seen an early build of *Stranger* but already the dustier side of Oddworld is a very impressive place. As well rendered as it is designed, the Xbox version looks every bit as good as we had hoped and it'll be interesting to see how the PlayStation2 version compares. Here's hoping the developer has learned its way around the PS2 hardware since the cancellation of *Munch's Oddysee* and the negative rumblings attached to it. Also noteworthy is the integration of first- and third-person elements – this seems to be very much the feature du jour but *Stranger* gives you more reason to enjoy a mix of the two viewpoints than just about any other similar title.

"THE SATISFACTION OF A WELL-PLANNED EXECUTION IS ITS OWN REWARD, MUCH LIKE IN MIDWAY'S PSI-OPS"

thanks to a subtle on-screen display. As Lanning explains, keeping the HUD functional was a priority. "If you're at full health, you won't see a health bar. If you're not around enemies then there's no radar. When you need it, it comes on, but when you don't it's not there to always make it feel like a game. And we're always trying to make it feel like more than a game."

While a 2005 release date is a great excuse to keep lips at Oddworld Inhabitants tighter than those of a sewn-up Mudokon, details about the early stages of the game have been more than sufficient to get us excited. Stranger will travel from town to town, encountering new races and taking on more bounties in order to buy his way up the mercenary food chain. We're told that the story will later unfold beyond that of a simple bounty hunter and that freedom of play will be key.

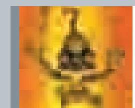
"If two people in this room played this, they'd do things entirely differently," says Lanning. "That was one of the feats that we really wanted to accomplish – it's one of the reasons for developing the first- and third-person aspects and also the live ammo concept." For such simple ideas, they work surprisingly well in realising multiple routes through areas and solutions to problems, and if the finished game can maintain the level of individual opportunity displayed so far, we'll be giggling ourselves stupid for some time.

But of all the things that shocked, surprised and amazed us about *Stranger*, the crowd that amassed behind us as our time with the game drew to an end rates perhaps most highly. It was difficult to gauge the ratio of those clamouring for the controller and those mesmerised by the on-screen action – more testament to the game's ease of play and entertaining nature than to our gaming prowess, much as it pains us to confess.

But then it dawned on us why the watchful mob was so significant. Mere minutes ago, it was us who gazed in awe as Lanning walked us through his surreal creation whereas here, the world's press were eating out of our hands as we showcased *Stranger*'s many ingenious features and its dark, almost sadistic sense of humour. There was no will to show off, no need to play to impress – unlike poor old unemployed Abe, we didn't even have to utter a 'follow me' to get the rabble to take to *Stranger*.



Breaking up town life and adventuring splits the game into two very different flavours.



MUDOKON PROFILE

First introduced to the public in *Abe's Oddysee*, Mudokons have a history of being mistreated at the hands of strange creatures twice their size. Characterised by their nasal voices, oversized hands and the ability to possess other creatures through mystic rituals, there can be no denying that Mudokons are really quite special.

HISTORY

- **MUNCH'S ODDYSEE** 2002 [Xbox]
- **ABE'S EXODDUS** 1998 [PSone]
- **ABE'S ODDYSEE** 1997 [PSone]

There are so many ways to go about each situation that you'll be happy to play areas again and again.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

"HI." "HI." "FOLLOW ME." "OKAY."

RED DEAD REVOLVER + MUNCH'S ODDYSEE x OFF-THE-WALL HUMOUR = ODDWORLD STRANGER

"WE WANTED A FRESH START TO PIONEER SOME OTHER TERRITORY ON THE PLANET OF ODDWORLD"
LORNE LANNING, ODDWORLD INHABITANTS

DESTROY ALL HUMANS!



VIDEOGAMES MATHS

VICE CITY MEETS THE X-FILES

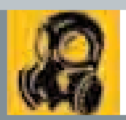
GTA: VICE CITY - CRIMINALS + ALIENS = DESTROY ALL HUMANS!

"USE DESTRUCTIVE WEAPONS AND INNATE MENTAL POWERS TO TAKE ON THE MOST FEARED ENEMY IN THE GALAXY – MANKIND"

DESTROY ALL HUMANS! WEBSITE

Crop circles, eh? Looks like all the sci-fi clichés will be present.

Telekinesis is a handy ability – especially useful for throwing around heaving great trucks.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Over the last six years, industry veterans Josh Resnick and Andrew Goldman have built Pandemic into one of the largest independent developers in the world, with studios in Los Angeles, California and Brisbane. Pandemic's games have won numerous awards and sold millions of copies worldwide.

HISTORY

- **FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR** 2004 [Xbox]
- **STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS** 2002 [Multi]
- **TRIPLE PLAY 98** 1997 [PSone]

WE GIVE PANDEMIC'S LATEST A GOOD PROBING

Let's face it – humans suck. Every day we're brutally reminded by our very surroundings that we're slowly but surely destroying our planet in a multitude of ways, each more dumbfounding and ridiculous than the last. Without putting too fine a point on it, we're wasteful, selfish, ungrateful scoundrels who deserve a good, hard kicking from some form of higher being. Occasionally, it would be good to see that we get what's coming to us – to pay the price for our shoddy attitude. Better still would be the chance to be the one in control of the damage that's being dealt out to our unappreciative race. Sadly, we're at the summit of the food chain as far this planet goes and there just don't seem to be any higher beings of adequate status to deal out the punishment. Unless we look to the stars…

Destroy All Humans! aims to give us the means to act out these desires by placing the player inside the shoes of a power-hungry alien force that wishes to relieve us of our little bit of the galaxy by any means necessary. Taking control of Cryptosprodium-137 (who we'll call Crypto, for our keyboard's sake) – a strangely cute little alien fella who's out for revenge after his brother was shot down over Roswell – you'll have to use your many alien abilities and advanced technologies to find a way to take Earth from the "pathetic human creatures" in the easiest or most destructive way you can, all the while avoiding the steely gaze of the Men In Black.

"THE DESTRUCTION IS JAW-DROPPING. WE JUST HOPE THAT YOU GET TO HAVE A POP AT THE WHITE HOUSE"

The main appeal of this task is the number of powers you'll have at your disposal. Obviously, you're armed with a multi-functional Laser Cannon – good for electrifying, disintegrating and generally zapping any mammal that appears disposable – but it's the alien mind tricks that really steal the show. In order to gain access to secure areas you'll have to scan guards' brains and find nuggets of information that will fit together and give you passwords, locations and information that will aid you in your mission.

You'll also have a camouflage ability that will allow you to create a holographic projection of any human in your sights that can be used to mask yourself so you can creep around incognito. Whether you opt to take advantage of this stealth option or prefer to destroy everything and everyone in your path will be up to you, but it's nice to have the choice.

There won't just be land-based battles either. On many occasions you'll be prompted to demolish entire facilities or cities, and with such a huge task ahead of you only the awesome firepower of your flying saucer will do. These sections look incredible and the sheer level of destruction that you're capable of creating from inside your ship is jaw-dropping. We just hope that you get to have a pop at the White House.

The demo we saw in action has definitely got us excited. Squeals of delight filled the room when an angry little Crypto first displayed his true power and used his telekinetic abilities to launch a truck into the air, wave it around a bit and then use the lump of gnarled metal to crush a panicking family of five. We have to admit that even after just a small glimpse of what the game has to offer, we're really looking forward to getting our hands on some playable code.

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PS2
ORIGIN: Australia
PUBLISHER: THQ
DEVELOPER: Pandemic
RELEASE: Q1 '05
GENRE: Action Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

In an interesting twist on the age-old 'humans v extra-terrestrials' conflict, use Crypto the alien's abilities to bring down mankind and help his race take over the planet.

A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE

Apart from the seemingly harmless mind-reading and image-projection routines that our alien friend can perform on our race, he can inflict a much more violent act upon humans to satisfy his need to collect. Throughout the game, Crypto will have the opportunity to rip Brain Stems from anyone he stumbles across. These gruesome collectables will come in a variety of colours (depending on the intelligence of its owner) and will be the equivalent of *Metal Gear*'s Dog Tags. Exactly how this nasty sounding process will occur and what purpose these Brain Stems will serve hasn't been confirmed, but you can be sure that they'll probably present some neat little unlockables or goodies to reward you for all your hard work.



You'll be able to use your Abduction Beam to, well, abduct things that you like the look of.

If you've got the technology, why not use it? Lay waste to cities from the comfort of your ship.

KILLZONE

"HALO BEATER? NO, NO – THIS IS THE KILLZONE"

Hype is a dangerous thing. A game needs a bit of spin in order to get the masses talking, but go too far and it's easy to see a game get released with no hope of living up to expectations. As we speak, *Killzone* is teetering way above us, halfway across a high wire – there's no safety net to prevent the disappointment of another *Driv3r* incident, and while one side of the audience is cheering it on, the other would like nothing more than to see it plummet into insignificance. But which will it be?

We've put in some time with an early version of the game and a few things are clear. For one, the pacing and progression of *Killzone* are far closer to titles like *Rainbow Six 3* rather than *Halo*, with which all comparisons are drawn. You'll almost always find yourself scurrying from one impromptu shield to the next, hiding behind whatever you can and popping out only to fling a few rounds at the genuinely smart enemies. These soldiers aren't too fond of death and it takes a fair few bullets before they drop. And that's only if you can find them – the AI does a great job of making forces spread out and use cover, and we've seen some genuinely well-worked plans and strategies put into action, much to our daisy-pushing dismay.

Much like the recent *Doom 3*, action in *Killzone* is heavily scripted and your allies are all keen to point you towards your next objective, helping you traverse the expansive yet strangely limiting environments (with no jump button, navigating even minor ledges can be a chore). Missions have a far more three-dimensional feel than in many similar shooters, sporting a decent amount of vertical travel as well as plenty of shoot-outs at close range and at a distance.

Your arsenal is usually tailored for such events and while you can only carry three guns at once, you'll often come across discarded firearms that you can switch with your own. These come in all shapes and sizes and are a good sign of Guerrilla's attention to detail – sights are set up and adjusted when the sniper rifle is taken out, for example, and the weapons themselves are a healthy mix of the familiar (pistols, rifles, SMGs with auxiliary grenade launchers and so on) and some more adventurous guns such as the versatile shotgun/rifle hybrid.

At this stage it's hard to know what to make of *Killzone*. The fundamentals are there but whether the final tweaks will give it the edge it needs is something that worries us. This is an unapologetically slow-paced title that cares more about offering a decent re-creation of urban warfare than it does about flashy visuals – it's a refreshing change but it makes it hard to get away from a mostly brown and grey palette. And this is one of the main problems so far. Weighty and impressive as the game is, progression is nowhere near as rewarding as it should be due to the similarity between locations, but this is liable to improve in the final version.

After all, *Killzone* is one of Sony's big hopes for Christmas and we can only imagine how much polishing is going on at Guerrilla right now…

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Holland
PUBLISHER: Sony
DEVELOPER: Guerrilla
RELEASE: Nov '04
GENRE: Shoot-'Em-Up
PLAYERS: 1-2 (Online TBA)

Battle through an intense single-player campaign or take the fight online and prove your superiority over other soldiers around the world.

"THE PACING AND PROGRESSION OF KILLZONE MEAN IT'S FAR CLOSER TO TITLES LIKE RAINBOW SIX 3 RATHER THAN HALO, WITH WHICH ALL COMPARISONS ARE DRAWN"

WAR IS COMING – LOOK BUSY

As much as Guerrilla is concentrating on the single-player side of *Killzone*, the online aspect is one that is looking particularly exciting, not least due to a lack of real competition on the market. Up to 16 players can compete in the usual slew of solo and team-based modes which feature, among the obvious, interesting modes like Supply Drop (think Capture The Flag but with multiple flags and the ability to raid the opponents' base) that should put some distance between this and its competitors. Despite similarities to *Rainbow Six* in the game's style, the greater bullet tolerance of every player turns the sneaky thrills into all-out firefights, and while this is a little more 'arcadey' (for want of a better word), it definitely holds together well and offers something different over most of its rivals.





Environments seem curiously limited right now, consisting mostly of brown and grey landscapes.





DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ When three small Dutch developers joined forces four years ago, we'd wager that they wouldn't have put much money on themselves to be developing one of the most anticipated games of 2004. Still, the ex-Lost Boys team finds itself doing just that today…

HISTORY

■ **SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67** 2004 [Multi]
■ **KNIGHTS** CANCELLED [PS2]

■ Finding adequate cover is vital as the enemy soliders are as smart as you are – if not smarter.

■ Not happy with the guns you're given? You might find a new one just lying around.

"KILLZONE WILL MAKE FANS OF FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS LOOK AT THE GENRE IN AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT WAY"

AMI BLAIRE, DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT MARKETING, SCEA

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

GETTING IN THE 'ZONE

HALO x RAINBOW SIX 3 + GAS MASKS = KILLZONE

ENTHUSIA PRO RACING

KONAMI TAKES A DRIVE DOWN A WELL-WORN ROAD



It's all looking nice enough – but that won't be enough to convince the masses of its worth.

PS2 **Vroom, vroom.** The unmistakable sound of a gamer revving the engine of their fully customised, ultra-stylish supercar – and a sound that's becoming a little too familiar. It's soon going to reach the point when photorealistic racing titles promising 'white-knuckle thrills' and 'ground-breaking gameplay mechanics' are dropping into our breakfast bowls from promotional boxes of Coco Pops.

Burnout 3, Midnight Club 3, Need For Speed Underground 2 and *Juiced* are waiting to consume every moment of our spare time and fulfill our longing for speed, the most realistic driving experience to date and incredibly shiny licensed cars. So what better time to announce a title that's going to provide – wait for it – speed, the most realistic driving experience to date and incredibly shiny licensed cars.

Unlike many of the titles mentioned above – which will be slapped onto our consoles before Christmas – *Enthusia* is set to be released early in 2005, thus arriving noticeably later than its rivals. Whether this will be labelled fashionably late or simply as missing the boat will depend on the overall quality of the title and exactly what it has to offer that hasn't already been flogged to death by its predecessors.

> "ONE THING ENTHUSIA HAS IN ITS FAVOUR IS AN INNOVATIVE 'VISUAL GRAVITY SYSTEM' THAT CONVEYS A SENSE OF SPEED"

Among the usual boasts of tracks, vehicles and realism, one of Konami's promises has caught our eye. Something *Enthusia* has in its favour is an innovative VGS (Visual Gravity System) that "conveys a true sense of G-forces experienced by high-speed driving and manoeuvring." This will be a first for the racing genre and how it is used is likely to play a large part in the success of the title.

We're not sure the VGS system will be enough to distinguish *Enthusia*, which, by aiming to be a title for "driving enthusiasts who appreciate the details of car physics, performance and motion rather than the time spent under the hood", is immediately stepping on the large, intimidating toes of *PGR2*. *Enthusia* is going to have to be on top of its game if it wants to compete.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Konami
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q1 '05
GENRE: Racing
PLAYERS: 1-2

Choose your dream vehicle, perfect your driving skills and race to win as you take on a range of real and fictional tracks.



It'll be interesting to see how the Visual Gravity System will actually work.



Focusing on skill rather than customisation could well work in *Enthusia*'s favour.


eMag

SHADOW OF ROME



Those Roman guards aren't known for their small talk. If you're discovered, best leg it sharpish.

CONTENDERS, READY – GLADIATORS, READY

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: March '04
GENRE: Action Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

A combination of extremely violent swordplay and sneaky stealth stages sees Capcom's Roman adventure striving for western popularity.

PS2 **From crazily original games with Japanese flair to a sombre, overly violent and decidedly western take on the bloody Roman empire. Has Capcom sold out?** No doubt that thought will cross a few minds once people have got their hands on *Shadow Of Rome*, a game that represents a remarkably different approach from the respected Japanese giant. Thankfully, the change of tack doesn't indicate a compromise in quality, and while the effort to globalise the appeal of its games might seem like a bit of a style detour, there's at least hope that the Capcom of old is still very much in charge of the gameplay.

Evidently, that's a reassurance that needs to be made from the off if *Shadow Of Rome* is to succeed. Despite appearing to take cues from previous Roman disappointments such as Acclaim's *Gladiator* and THQ's *Circus Maximus*, Capcom's effort manages to combine a hefty slice of gladiatorial combat and violent chariot racing with other more subtle stealth elements to create something rather more enjoyable.

The emphasis on a serious plot certainly helps the game along. Following the trials of Agrippa (a heroic soldier returning to Rome to clear his father's name of the murder of Julius Caesar) and Octavius (Caesar's nephew and close friend of Agrippa), the comparisons between *Shadow Of Rome*'s premise and Ridley Scott's gladiatorial cinematic opus aren't hard to see. However, the distinct split in gameplay styles keeps the action fresh from mission to mission. One minute, you'll be playing as Agrippa – first on the battlefields of Germania before moving on to slaughtering gladiators, fighting tigers and trying to survive to the end of the tournament – the next, the action switches to Octavius as he sneaks around trying to uncover the truth about his uncle's murder.

Perfecting the skills needed for success in each section of the game takes some practice. The tournament action stages, for example, look like they require little more than button-bashing swordplay but it's clear that Agrippa's abilities hold plenty of potential for skilled use. The huge range of armaments – from basic swords and bows to maces, spears and hulking halberds – allows you to frequently change your attack style, not least because overuse of a single weapon causes it to break. You can grab the weapons of your fallen enemies, use leftover armour, recover severed body parts to use as makeshift bludgeons, take command of objects such as catapults and slingshots, wrestle weapons from an opponent and more besides… The options might not be endless, but thanks to the solid fighting engine created by Capcom, they're certainly numerous.

"VISUAL FLAIR AND SOME MEATY HACK-AND-SLASH GAMEPLAY COULD GIVE CAPCOM A SLEEPER HIT"

In contrast to the complexity of the combat, the stealth element of the game is somewhat rudimentary, although this, to be fair, may be more to do with the game's current unfinished state rather than a failure by Capcom. Certainly, helping Octavius evade detection by donning disguises, hiding in pots and peering round corners isn't exactly *Splinter Cell* but we've got faith that this less in-your-face side of the action will be suitably polished in time for the game's release next year.

The visual flair already present combined with the delicate balance of gameplay styles could be enough to give *Shadow Of Rome* the edge it needs. The change in style is a gamble for Capcom, but one we believe could pay off handsomely.

ATTILA THE PUN

***Shadow Of Rome*'s violence, gore and dramatic cut-scenes might give it a very serious appearance, but the combo system proves the game still has a sense of humour. Securing each stage's golden trophy requires enough Salvo points, earned by pleasing the crowd. Not surprisingly, this means drawing as much blood as you can in as violent a way as possible – everything from general attacks and cutting off limbs to throwing severed heads into the baying mob. The more you do, the higher your points climb – not to mention the number of guffaw-inspiring move names you get to uncover. Ripping someone's arms off? You need Disarmed. Sneaking up and killing a foe without being seen? That's a Hole In One. You get the idea…**

SHADOW OF ROME
PLAYSTATION2

DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Despite being based in Japan, Capcom's determination to become a more global company has seen it attempt to appeal to a broader audience – hence the existence of a more western-style title such as *Shadow Of Rome*. Hopefully, this won't result in the loss of the trusted Japanese ideals for which it is better known.

HISTORY

■ **P.N.03** 2003 [Cube]
■ **GREGORY HORROR SHOW** 2003 [PS2]
■ **VIEWTIFUL JOE** 2003 [Multi]



■ "Thwow him to the gwound, centurion. Woughly!" There's plenty of gladiatorial combat here.

■ So, you like movies about gladiators? This'll suit you, then. What a departure for Capcom…

"SITUATIONS WILL ARISE WHERE PLAYERS WILL RELY ON NOTHING BUT THEIR HANDS TO COMBAT THOSE IMPEDING THEIR QUEST"
CAPCOM PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

INFAMY, INFAMY – THEY'VE ALL GOT IT INFAMY

DEVIL MAY CRY x GLADIATOR + SNEAKING = SHADOW OF ROME


eMag

PAPER MARIO 2: THE THOUSAND YEAR DOOR



Intelligent Systems has obviously been rustling up some hefty bosses to fight.

Cardboard backgrounds and colouring pencils are standard décor for the *Paper Mario* world.

DETAILS
FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
DEVELOPER: Intelligent Systems
RELEASE: 12 Nov
GENRE: Action RPG
PLAYERS: 1

Nintendo's mascot returns once again in his rarely seen paper form, to save the Mushroom Kingdom (and probably a Princess or two) from the forces of evil.

COULD IT BE THE STUFF THAT REAMS ARE MADE OF?

It's been the best part of three years since Mario's first wafer-thin RPG hit the N64. Simple, cute and surprisingly involving, *Paper Mario* was a title that could be played and enjoyed by gamers who couldn't get on with the many narrative-heavy RPGs around at the time, though it didn't lose too many of the elements that fans of the genre rave about. A sequel was well overdue and now *Paper Mario 2* is on its way.

In an effort to enhance the original battle formula, Mario will now take to the stage when confronted by a foe. With an audience watching the plumber's every move the pressure's on to impress, and whether you receive extra moves or get pelted with debris will depend on how well your performance goes down when the curtain goes up.

"MARIO'S WILLINGNESS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HIS FLIMSY PAPER FORM SHOULD PROVIDE PLENTY OF NEW CHALLENGES"

Also new to the sequel is Mario's willingness to take full advantage of his flimsy paper form. The ability to fold yourself up into a plane or tube will provide new puzzle and exploration elements that should help this title rise well above the standard of the first game and guarantee that it doesn't take a battering for lack of innovation when review time rolls around.

A number of new characters will be waiting to either aid you on your quest or make your life hell. Among your friends will be a rather bruised Koopa Troopa and the windy Madam Clouda, while stepping up to fulfill the role of villain are three veiled individuals who illustrate their evil ways by plotting to resurrect the Great Shadow Witch. Thankfully, the presence of these wrongdoers doesn't mean that Bowser's been relieved of his duty and the spine-covered reptile appears playable in an adventure section of his very own in order to reveal the identities of the shrouded figures that insist on muscling in on his turf. This will lead to you to an interesting flip-reversed situation where you end up taking control of Bowser and his fiery powers as he travels through an early level from *Super Mario Bros.* – most definitely a satisfying task.

Being a title that contains Nintendo's mustachioed mascot, this is a game that's near guaranteed to sell copies-a-plenty, and from what we've seen it's looking to deserve these high sales figures – though we'd expect no less from Nintendo.



With battles taking place in front of an audience, it'll be tough not to fold under the pressure. Sorry…

PROJECT: SNOWBLIND

THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT, THE FUTURE'S MODDED



Boom. That chopper really didn't stand a chance – and see how pretty it looks when it explodes.

PS2 **As superb as the *Deus Ex* titles were, there are many gamers who would have happily exchanged the need to interface with many of the game's characters with good old-fashioned bloodshed.** Luckily, from our first look at the early *Project: Snowblind* code, it looks like we'll be able to do just that.

Based in the near future, you'll take control of the first of a new breed of elite super-soldier. Rather than the flowing cape and sturdy underwear that's usually associated with persons of a super nature, these soldiers justify their super-ness with the vast range of high-tech weaponry and stat-boosting Biomods at their disposal. You're charged with the task of leading your soldier and his team through 16 war-torn maps featuring a combination of futuristic violence and stealth missions.

Although many of the 24 available weapons and Biomods – such as the unstoppable Mag-Rail – seem to have been ripped straight from *Invisible War*, there will be plenty of new additions that stand to make *Project: Snowblind* that much more interesting than your average war-based FPS. Bio-Energy-based attacks like electrical storm creation can wreak havoc with your enemy's vehicles, while Time Grenades will allow you to jump into bullet time, giving you a huge speed advantage and the ability to catch thrown grenades in mid-air before switching back to real-time to return them to their owners.

"ESSENTIALLY, THIS LOOKS SET TO BE AN FPS WITH IMAGINATION"

For those not suitably impressed with the single-player missions, the now standard online options will also be present. These will offer multiple play modes for yourself and 15 friends (or strangers, of course), including standard team and flag battles as well as some new modes that are yet to be revealed.

Essentially, this looks set to be an FPS with imagination. When a mission is completed, a memorial wall will remind you of the team-mates that you left to perish, when all the while the futuristic lure of Kicker Guns and shield-generating White Wall Grenades will prompt you to cause yet more carnage in new and fantastic ways.

It will definitely be interesting to see how this title turns out early next year. If it manages to deliver on its promises and keeps the solid style of play that we've seen so far, it may just end up a must-have title.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Eidos
DEVELOPER: Crystal Dynamics
RELEASE: Q1 '05
GENRE: FPS
PLAYERS: 1 (1-16)

Take control of an elite super-soldier, use high-tech weaponry to progress through missions and 'mod' yourself to become the ultimate fighting machine.



We're really looking forward to getting our virtual mitts on some of this weaponry.

The purple veins on your arm will be a familiar sight for anyone who's played a *Deus Ex* game.


eMag

METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES



■ There are worse things to worry about than Space Pirates…

"IMMERSE YOURSELF IN LIGHT AND DARK AETHER AS YOU EXPLORE MASSIVE, DANGEROUS ALIEN ENVIRONMENTS TEEMING WITH INTELLIGENT ENEMIES"
NINTENDO.COM

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

I'M HAVING SUCH A GOOD TIME, I'M HAVING A BALL

METROID PRIME × IKARUGA + SPLIT-SCREEN = METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES

■ The Morph Ball returns for yet more hours of rolling exploration.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Based in Austin, Texas, Retro Studios (a wholly owned subsidiary of Nintendo) has been up and running since 1998 and actually cancelled an anticipated project to concentrate on its first commercial release, *Metroid Prime*. If only all studios could start out so well…

HISTORY

- **METROID PRIME** 2002 [GameCube]
- **RAVEN BLADE** CANCELLED [GameCube]

DETAILS

FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
DEVELOPER: Retro Studios
RELEASE: 26 Nov
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1-4

The sequel to what is arguably the best game on the Cube, *Echoes* sees Samus Aran return to action in another first-person adventure that continues the great legacy of the *Metroid* series.

SAMUS IT EVER WAS? THINK AGAIN…

The bottleneck has begun. With the likes of *Black Arrow*, *Burnout 3* and *Battlefront* already chewing up our time with their online thrills and *The Sims 2*, *Winning Eleven 8* and the like satisfying our offline needs, we're up to our gills in games. This month will see many more titles join the shrink-wrapped stacks that are piling up around us, and by the end of November we'll be drowning in great software that we just don't have time to play. Thankfully, some of these games have VIP passes straight into our consoles based on prior form – this will see games like *Halo 2*, *Prince Of Persia 2* and, of course, *Metroid Prime 2* jump the queues as we see continuations of some of the finest franchises of this generation. Or in *Metroid*'s case, one of the finest franchises in gaming, period.

Scanning and navigating your environments are just a couple of the elements to have received overhauls – the former provides on-screen identification and log percentages for you to keep track of your progress while assisting in the latter by offering more clues and information than before. There also seems to be a greater emphasis on Samus's ability to roll around so expect plenty more Morph Ball puzzles and side-scrolling sections as well as new ways of using your spherical form. Cannons that allow you to reach distant platforms, pseudo-stealth sections where danger can be avoided rather than confronted and improved functionality for the Spider Ball are all promised, in addition to the usual array of pipes and switches for your rolling pleasure.

The theme of Light and Darkness is carried far deeper than we initially thought. As well as encountering enemies and weapons of each alignment, you can travel between chromatically opposed areas of Aether – the Light sections are reminiscent of much of *Prime* whereas the shadow world is an intensely evil place. Indeed, the oppressive atmosphere in many parts means that you'll be calling upon your new Light Beam to create safe pockets in which to traverse hazardous areas. Worse still for your health are the Ing, denizens of the darkness bestowed with the ability to take on liquid form. Aside from these cheating beings, you'll also face off against more familiar foes – Space Pirates reprise their roles from *Prime*, several enemies from *Fusion* look to return, and a combination of terminals we scanned and the game's title would suggest that maybe, just maybe, there'll be Metroids here…

Naturally, there are still elements that we can't help but question – multiplayer, while actually much better than we feared, is likely to get the game branded an FPS as opposed to the adventure it is, and there's not a lot here (aside from the possibility of tweaked controls) that will change people's minds if they didn't get on with *Prime*. We think it's safe to say that these gamers would be in the minority anyway and *Echoes* isn't a game designed to change opinions – it's a game true to its prestigious heritage and one that looks set to build on the success of the last game.

There's even talk of Retro offering dual-analogue FPS-style control, again edging the game away from the genre in which it rightly belongs but at the same time improving accessibility. Whether or not this is included probably won't be known until we get hold of the finished version, but one thing is for sure – November is going to be a ridiculously good month for gamers.

BEAM ME UP

While fans of the previous *Metroid* games will have enjoyed *Prime*'s familiar armaments, a move to distance *Echoes* from its predecessor sees Samus's weapons take on Light and Dark themes. As in *Ikaruga*, each is particularly effective on its opposite force – a charged blast from the shotgun-like Light Beam is usually enough to deal with more shady foes while the Dark Beam can vaporise Light enemies. There even look to be ways of combining the powers of both Beam weapons at once as well as using them for solving puzzles as you did with the weapons (primarily the Wave Beam) in *Prime*.

"SCANNING AND NAVIGATING YOUR ENVIRONMENTS ARE JUST A COUPLE OF THE GAMEPLAY ELEMENTS TO HAVE RECEIVED NOTICEABLE OVERHAULS"



The Dark and Light worlds are very different. Guess which one's evil…

Is multiplayer *Metroid* the way to make the series more accessible?

GRAND THEFT AUTO



100 hidden packages will have you hunting high and low.

The new visuals are almost retina-searing in their brightness.

ROCKSTAR'S FRANCHISE SPOTS ANOTHER FORMAT IT HASN'T CONQUERED YET

DETAILS

FORMAT: GBA
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games
DEVELOPER: Rockstar North/ Digital Eclipse
RELEASE: 22 Oct
GENRE: Action/Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

Grand Theft Auto and Nintendo come together at last as Liberty City heads towards Game Boy Advance

And it's about time too. Having been forced to endure a 'will they, won't they' pantomime saga that lasted longer than anyone cares to remember, Rockstar have finally turned around and given Game Boy Advance owners exactly what they want – a handheld version of *Grand Theft Auto*. And the best bit? Despite revert to the 2D style of old, it's a completely new (and highly polished) game, rather than a port of any of the earlier titles. Joy.

Of course, the story is typical for a *Grand Theft Auto* title. You, along with your crime partner Vinnie, plan to do one final job for the mob before leaving Liberty City and a life of crime behind.

"IT'S THE ORIGINAL 2D STYLINGS OF THE SERIES MIXED WITH WHAT ROCKSTAR LEARNT FROM GRAND THEFT AUTO III"



Expect the usual array of characters with stereotypical mafia names.

Unsurprisingly, it all goes a bit wrong and after Vinnie's car is blown up, you find yourself short of both your best friend and all your money. And so it begins – a rip-roaring rampage of revenge that sees you stealing cars, doing jobs and basically killing anyone you please in an effort to hunt down Vinnie's killers.

However, that's not to say that Rockstar hasn't made improvements to the original framework and thanks to lessons learnt from the PS2 version, *Grand Theft Auto* allows you to move outside the story and indulge in the even more casual freedom the series has become known for. Taxi driver, firefighter and paramedic side missions are just some of the inclusions in this version, along with all-new street racing and the series' trademark rampages. The most impressive boast made so far though has to be the claim that the handheld version of Liberty City will be twice as large as the one seen in *GTAIII* – and seeing as Rockstar hasn't broken a promise in a while, we're liable to believe it. That much work has been done on the visual side of things as well just makes the package surprising. Co-developer Digital Eclipse (the company behind Sony's upcoming PSP launch title *Death Jr*) may have taken the game back to its 2D roots but the bright, almost cartoon-like graphics are a far cry from the washed out pixels of yesteryear. In fact, the only thing that could prove a fly in the ointment are the controls; with Rockstar yet to confirm whether the slightly clunky movement of the original games or a more intuitive system has been employed, we're having to hold fire on branding this the next big thing for Nintendo's handheld. Even though it clearly already is. Damn.


eMag

BATTLEFIELD 2



A chopper gag would be far too obvious. Just look at the screen and see how great the game's looking.

Thanks to the new material penetration feature, there's no guarantee that taking cover is going to save you every time.

DON'T EXPECT ANOTHER CLONE WAR…

Head out onto the streets, grab yourself the first war veteran you come across and start up a conversation. You'll undoubtedly be told all about war, how terrible it is and how we should all count ourselves lucky that we live in a day where we aren't ordered directly to the front line to defend our country the moment we come of age.

In a way, this just isn't true. As soon as a young gamer is old enough to grasp a joypad and has managed to acquire the necessary thumb dexterity to face a game with relative success, a world of gaming warfare is immediately thrust upon them whether they like it or not. We can't say this is a bad thing, though. Over the years there have been many excellent war games in nearly every genre. Whether you were playing *Operation Wolf* on your Master System or the recent and impressive *Full Spectrum Warrior*, these games have been so vast in number that they've been difficult to avoid. Despite this fact, one of the series that has stood out over the last few years is the *Battlefield* franchise.

Intended as a sequel to the award-winning *Battlefield 1942*, *Battlefield 2* drags the franchise forward a good few years to the modern day in order to provide all the latest weapons, vehicles and warmongering wizardry that our armed forces mess around with. Choosing to fight for one of three military superpowers – the US, China or the Middle East Coalition – the player will have access to over 30 different vehicles, many varied destructible environments and plenty of explosive carnage as they attempt to keep themselves alive and climb the promotional ladder until they reach the coveted rank of General.

Unlike *Battlefield Vietnam* – which seemed to be merely *1942* with different backdrops – *Battlefield 2* will come complete with a brand new game engine that should help to satisfy those who still feel a little cheated by *Vietnam*. Adding to the new elements is a material penetration feature that measures each individual weapon's ability to fire through objects. This means that diving behind a seemingly protective metal keg may not save you from the shower of lead that your enemies are firing at you if their weapons are packed full of armour-piercing ammo – suddenly a huge difference between cover and protection has been created. With this kind of realism, an intricate knowledge of all the game's weapons and ammo is likely to be required if you want to stand a chance against any other players – which brings us nicely to the multiplayer options…

Well, it would if we actually knew what was happening with the multiplayer options. Although we're promised over a hundred players and "some of the largest online battles on the PC", as it stands it hasn't been confirmed exactly how many players will be able to jump online and rip each other to ribbons, or what modes will be available. Not that it really matters – in our view a hundred soldiers are more than enough to have a good skirmish, but the more the merrier, we guess.

Battlefield 2 seems to be offering a fair bit and genuinely looks as if it's going to stand head and shoulders above any of its predecessors – and it'll be good to see a *Battlefield* game that's more than just an add-on or glorified expansion pack.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: Sweden
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
DEVELOPER: Digital Illusions
RELEASE: Feb '05
GENRE: FPS
PLAYERS: TBC

While keeping to the gameplay and style of the *Battlefield* series, *Battlefield 2* slams you into the middle of conflicts set in the present day. Move out, soldier…

15 MINUTES OF FAME

Battlefield 2 **will come complete with a feature called Battlefield TV. As the name suggests, this is a way to record your games from start to finish if you wish and play them back to show your friends, grandparents or dog exactly how much of a hardened war hero you'd have been had you been around when the real action was taking place. As well as being able to rewind, fast forward and rotate your battles, Battlefield TV records engine events rather than video files, so your film of destruction will be under a megabyte in size – perfect for uploading onto websites or sending by email. As an added bonus, since you can view what's going on from any angle, any cheaters out there are likely to be caught in the act and ridiculed. You've been warned.**

"THIS SHOULD HELP TO SATISFY THOSE GAMERS WHO STILL FEEL A LITTLE CHEATED BY BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM"

BATTLEFIELD 2
PC

DEVELOPER PROFILE
■ Swedish development studio Digital Illusions was founded in March 2000 as a small, privately owned company. Specialising in developing quality software for Microsoft Windows, its programs have sold thousands of copies in over 50 countries.

HISTORY
■ **BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM** 2004 [PC]
■ **MIDTOWN MADNESS 3** 2003 [Xbox]
■ **BATTLEFIELD 1942** 2002 [Multi]



"BATTLEFIELD 2 SHOWCASES AN ALL-NEW GAME ENGINE AND PHYSICS SYSTEM TO BRING THE MODERN BATTLEFIELD TO LIFE LIKE NEVER BEFORE"

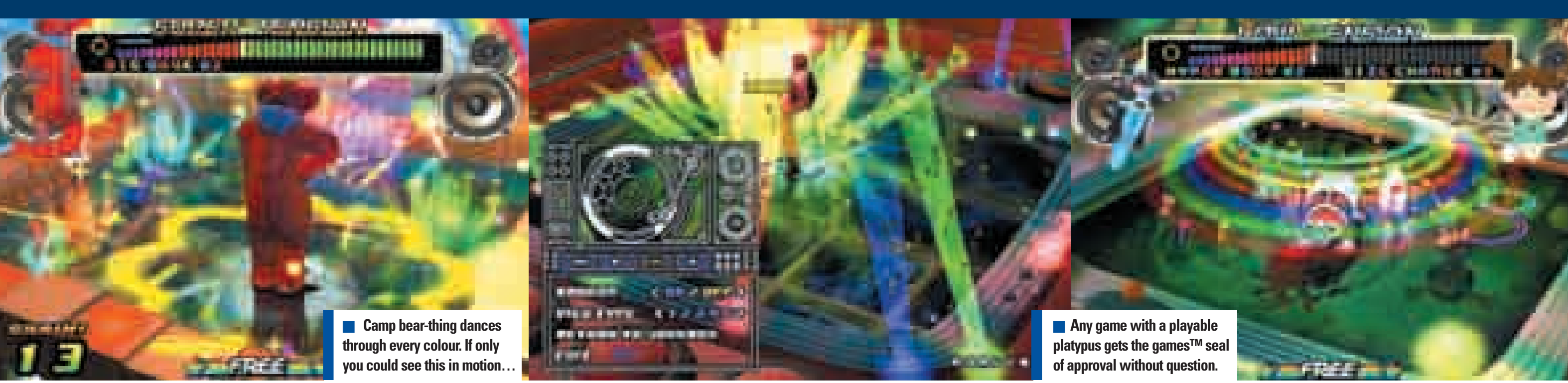
EA PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS
BRINGS THE FIGHT TO YOUR DOORSTEP

BATTLEFIELD 1942 - 1942 + NOW = BATTLEFIELD 2

■ Teamwork, violence and over a hundred players – we can't wait to see this online.

TECHNIC BEAT



Camp bear-thing dances through every colour. If only you could see this in motion…

Any game with a playable platypus gets the games™ seal of approval without question.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Mastiff
DEVELOPER: Arika
RELEASE: TBA (Japan/US: Out Now)
GENRE: Rhythm Action
PLAYERS: 1-2

In another feat of rhythm action genius, guide your chosen platypus, bear or, well, *thing* around a dance floor and hit the musical rings.

THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON DRUGS. A LOT OF DRUGS…

Traditionally, the rhythm action genre is one of the main bastions of Japan's quirkiness in the west. You only need look to *Vib Ribbon*, *Gitaroo Man* or *Mad Maestro* for conclusive proof of this, and just when you thought that perhaps the sea of crazy ideas was beginning to run dry, the veritable tsunami of insanity that is *Technic Beat* looms over the horizon.

Browsing the plentiful track list will give gamers reason to be cheerful, as there's a plethora of classic tunes as well as a whole host of new ones. With Shinji Hosoe (a composer at Namco during the Eighties) now at Arika, strings have been pulled to license tunes from *Pac-Mania*, *Ridge Racer*, *Splatterhouse* and *Dragon Spirit* among many others, as well as plenty of Arika's own tunes and original pieces.

The basic premise is a simple one – move your colour-drenched character into the many musical loops that appear in the arena then press buttons in time with the pulses and the music. As you progress, you'll also need to learn to use elements such as multiple hit loops while picking up the ability to shift rings and link moves together, effectively adding your own twist to the already great tunes.

Like all the best music games, *Technic Beat* starts off alarmingly easy and gets progressively more taxing until even veterans (anyone that can clear Master Mojo King Bee in *Gitaroo Man*, for example) will struggle to keep up. And that's one of this game's best features – with almost a hundred songs in total and some excruciatingly tough ones in there, even at full price, fans of the genre would be glad to throw cash at it.

"SCOFF DOWN ALL OF TOYTOWN'S NARCOTICS AND YOU STILL COULDN'T COME UP WITH ANYTHING LIKE THIS"

Thankfully, publisher Mastiff is set to unleash the manic title upon the US at a slightly lower price, presumably to make up for the fact that it's been out in Japan for almost two years now. As unlikely as a PAL release seems at the moment, we've got fingers, toes and even internal organs crossed in the hope that a European publisher snaps up the game.

In the meantime, we'll put the internet to its second best use then drum our fingers while we wait for our copy to be shipped. The real question is, can our brains take it? Outlook not so good…



Once you learn the basics, the rest comes surprisingly quickly and easily.


eMag

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3



"ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3 ALLOWS YOU TO FEEL THE VISCERAL EXPERIENCE OF RIDING THE COASTERS THAT YOU DESIGN FROM THE FRONT SEAT"

ATARI PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

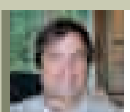
KEEP YOUR ARMS IN THE CAR AT ALL TIMES

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON - CROWDS + 3D = ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3

■ No matter how intense the ride, *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3* catches every sickening turn.

■ You'll find every sort of ride possible in *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3*. It's not just rollercoasters, you know…

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3
PC

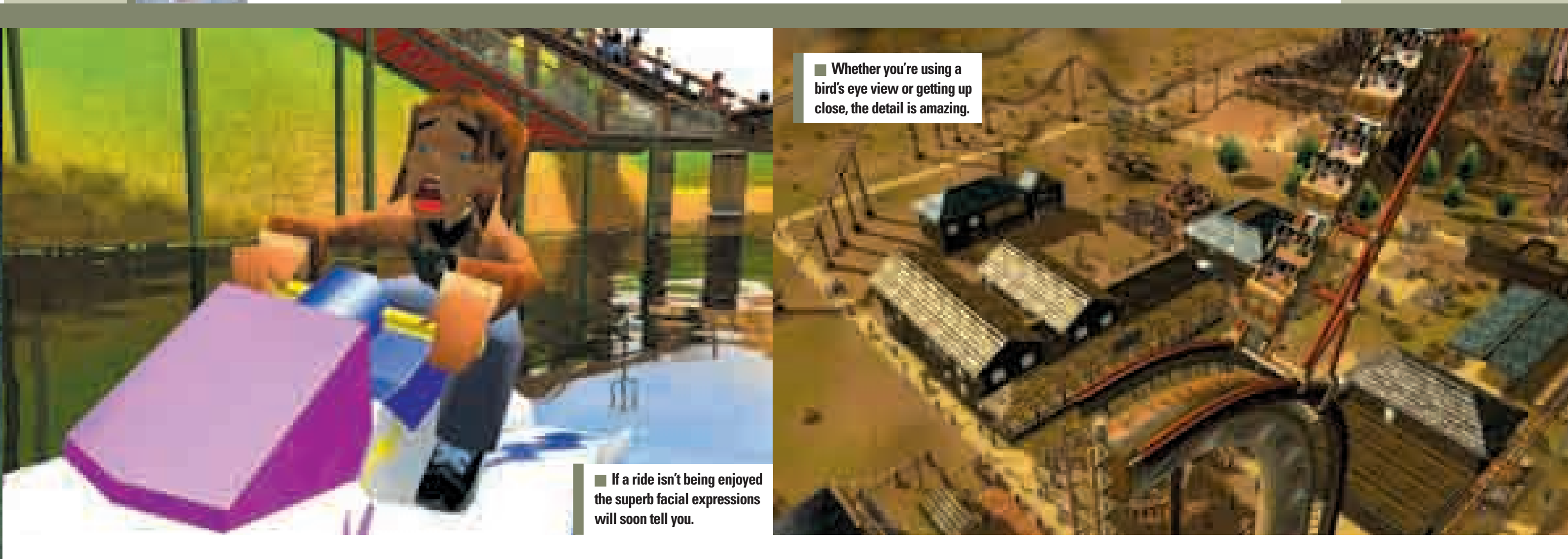


DEVELOPER PROFILE

Well known as the co-developer of *Elite*, David Braben has constantly used cutting-edge technology in his titles to help enhance the games-playing experience. Braben has already worked on expansion packs for *RollerCoaster Tycoon 2*, but this is the first time that his studio, Frontier Developments, has taken the helm.

HISTORY

- **FIRST ENCOUNTERS** 1995 [Multi]
- **FRONTIER** 1993 [Multi]
- **ELITE** 1984 [Multi]



Whether you're using a bird's eye view or getting up close, the detail is amazing.

If a ride isn't being enjoyed the superb facial expressions will soon tell you.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Atari
DEVELOPER: Frontier Developments
RELEASE: Q4 '04
GENRE: Management
PLAYERS: 1

The *RollerCoaster Tycoon* franchise finally breaks away from its isometric roots and makes the jump to the third dimension.

IF ONLY ALTON TOWERS WAS THIS MUCH FUN

Taking a franchise into the third dimension can prove tricky. Just look at *Worms 3D*, *Castlevania: Lament Of Innocence* and *Street Fighter EX* for proof that the transition isn't always a wise one. Yet a shift in dimension appears to have worked wonders for the *RollerCoaster Tycoon* series.

After working on several expansions for *RollerCoaster Tycoon 2*, Frontier Developments is now ready to take the plunge – quite literally – and is making the first true 3D game of the franchise. The most exciting prospect of *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3* is that you can experience every gut-churning ride first hand, and watching your newly built ride spin through giddying loops and hurtle along at sickening speeds is truly satisfying and allows you to gauge the excitement in a way that just wasn't possible with the first two titles.

Whether you're sedately moving around your park in a newly constructed monorail or frantically spinning through the countless revolutions of a rollercoaster from hell, Frontier has captured every moment in motion. Perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of these rides, though, is that you can see the expressions of the other occupants. Depending on their personalities, you'll see some people punching the air in excitement and boasting huge grins, while others will be looking scared stiff, only to stagger off your ride once it's finally stopped.

As enjoyable as testing out all the rides may be, it's only a small part of *RollerCoaster*'s charm. Management buffs will find themselves catered for thanks to the huge amount of options that have been crammed into the game, and the game's extensive engine allows a staggering amount of people to enjoy your creation. There's an expansive selection of clothing combinations and you can now create groups of characters that will stick together as they walk through your park. Children will run ahead while their parents casually walk behind them, gangs of youths loiter around rides (obviously up to no good) and teenage lovers will try to sneak off for a kiss whenever they can. The diversity on offer turns your park into an almost living environment – you even feel sorry when younger children can't get on certain rides because they aren't tall enough.

And that's before the real fun of actually building your rides begins. Thankfully, Frontier has added plenty of new tools to ensure that the creation process is as painless as possible. The biggest improvement to the new editor is the adjustment of terrain; previous versions made this fiddly, but you can now create huge hills or deep valleys with the minimum of fuss. Rollercoasters can either be bought in a complete state or can be built piece-by-piece, and there's a bewildering amount of different rides to choose from. While no official theme parks have made it in to *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3*, we're pretty confident that you'll have the tools to make them yourself anyway. The interface is also being overhauled, with the aim being to make it much more user-friendly and accessible to the casual gamer.

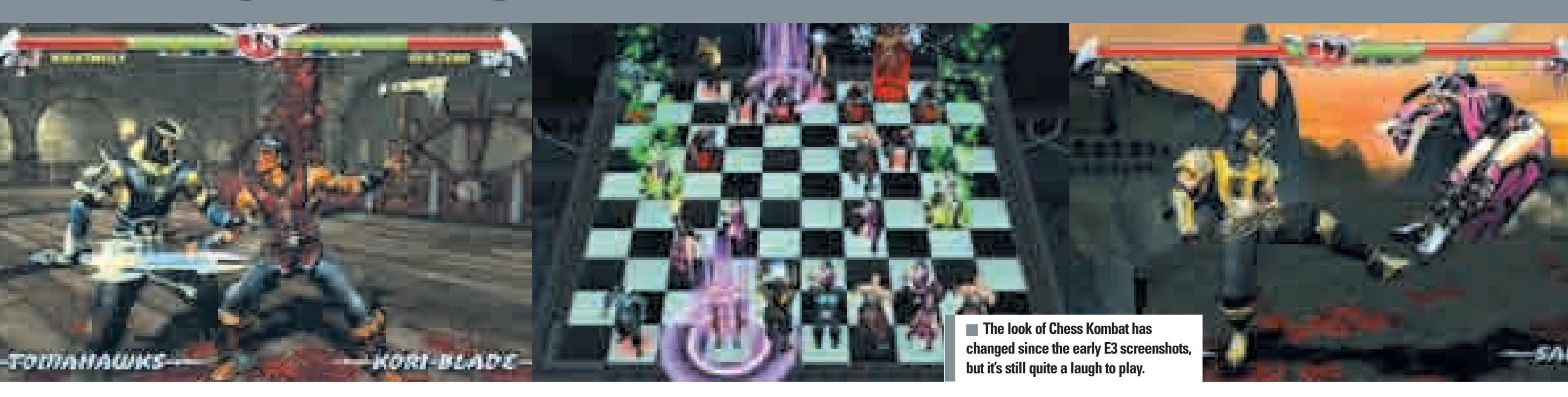
With the addition of a Sandbox mode, to allow those gamers without the time to build their own park to just experience the game's many scenarios on a first-hand basis, Frontier appears to have finally created the perfect package. Let's just hope we don't feel sick before Atari brings the ride to a stop…

PAY AND DISPLAY

Not content with delivering sumptuous scenery and a diverse amount of different personalities, Frontier Developments has also added a brand new fireworks display to excite your park's visitors. Using Fireworks MixMaster, you will be able to design pyrotechnic masterpieces that are perfectly synchronised to whatever music you choose. As well as looking pretty, these firework displays will play an important part in your park's future. The more elaborate your displays are, the more people you'll attract to the park; keep them happy and they won't mind more money. Displays can be set to music – either the game's pre-set files, or your own MP3s – so if you want your park to be alight with the music of Busted, now's your chance.

"FRONTIER HAS ADDED PLENTY OF NEW TOOLS TO MAKE CREATING A MASTERPIECE AS PAINLESS AS POSSIBLE"

MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION



The look of Chess Kombat has changed since the early E3 screenshots, but it's still quite a laugh to play.

NOW WITH ADDED VITAMIN K

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Midway
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Nov '04 (US: Out Now)
GENRE: Beat-'Em-Up
PLAYERS: 1-2

The *Mortal Kombat* gravy train keeps on rolling, with *Deception* attempting to fill in the gaps that riddled *Deadly Alliance*.

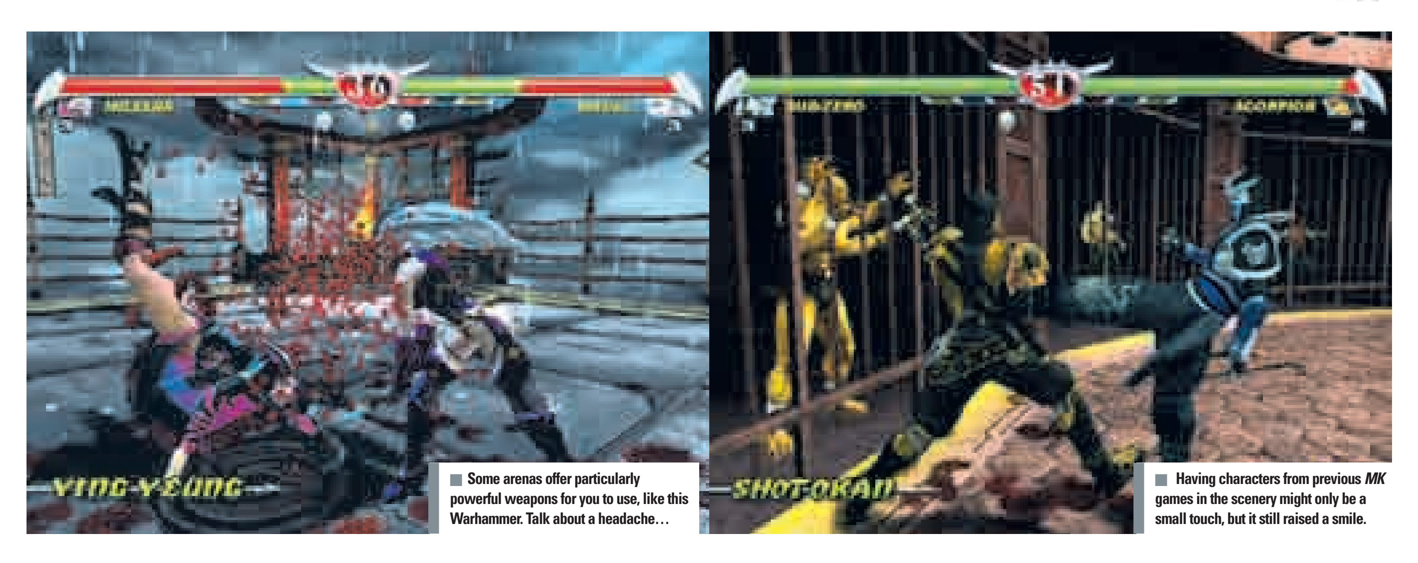
We admit it – we like *Mortal Kombat*. There's just something about the combination of tongue-in-cheek humour and gushing arteries that makes us smile. But with the last game – *Deadly Alliance* – dragging *Mortal Kombat* kicking and screaming into the world of 3D beat-'em-ups, we couldn't help be disappointed. After all, this is a series that prides itself on the little things as much as over-the-top fighting, and while the game certainly managed to reinvent the franchise to some degree, many of the series' trademark elements were notably absent.

Thankfully, that's a concern that *Mortal Kombat: Deception* is attempting to remedy, though you may not notice the improvements at first. That's because the bulk of the game, particularly the fighting engine, is a tweaked version of *Deadly Alliance* rather than a completely new title. Kombatants still have three fighting styles (one weapon-based and two martial arts, switched at the press of a button) and plenty of button-string combos with which to duke it out in destructible arenas. So far, so nothing new. However, *Deception*'s attention to detail and a slew of new elements – from extra characters and new game modes to the addition of traditional *Mortal Kombat* elements missing from *Deadly Alliance* – help up the ante.

Some subtle adjustment to the way characters interact with each other's moves (including the ability to 'break' opponents' attacks) brings the game more in line with more skilful fighting games, even if the series will never be seen in the same light as something like *Virtua Fighter*. The addition of multi-stage arenas – allowing you to throw people through walls and over balconies to reach new locations – along with the reintroduction of stage fatalities is a nice touch that keeps the action fresh, while multiple fatalities for each kombatant are something the last game was crying out for.

In fact, with Chess Kombat and Puzzle Kombat also distractingly enjoyable, the only thing we're not sure about is the revamped Konquest mode; having not seen enough of it to know whether it really is the deep RPG-style mode promised, we're waiting for our fears to be allayed on that front. Fingers crossed, we won't be disappointed.

> "DECEPTION REPRESENTS AN UPGRADE WITH ADDED EXTRAS RATHER THAN A WHOLE NEW GAME, WHICH ISN'T NECESSARILY A BAD THING"



Some arenas offer particularly powerful weapons for you to use, like this Warhammer. Talk about a headache…

Having characters from previous *MK* games in the scenery might only be a small touch, but it still raised a smile.


eMag

GUILD WARS



Now you can join your fantasy colleagues without having to traipse all over the game world.

FINALLY, AN MMORPG THAT'S ALL BUMP AND NO GRIND

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: NCSoft
DEVELOPER: ArenaNet
RELEASE: Feb '05
GENRE: MMORPG
PLAYERS: Massively Multiplayer

A massively multiplayer online RPG for the new generation, with all the mundane aspects removed to emphasise the combat – just what the genre needs.

As we meet the people from ArenaNet, their confidence is almost palpable. You wouldn't expect it to be, considering the circumstances – not only is the game we've come to see the studio's first project but it's an MMORPG, a genre that tends to only generate excitement in a small niche of gamers. Nevertheless, the confidence is there, a sureness that confirms the company's passion for the project without mutating into cockiness. Does ArenaNet know something we don't?

The answer lies with *Guild Wars*, a game that could (if it fulfils its creators' promises) bring MMORPG gaming to a new audience. Thankfully, that's more than just an idle boast – it's clear that the minds at ArenaNet are determined to crack open a genre that's traditionally reserved solely for the most dedicated of players.

A perfect example of how *Guild Wars* tackles this problem is the game's focus on action. Following the philosophy that players should be able to quickly get into the game, meet up with friends and have fun (rather than spending hours preparing to have fun), *Guild Wars*' lack of more traditional elements such as a persistent overworld or the need to travel between locations on foot might come as a shock to the MMORPG faithful. But it's a process that definitely works – while the loss of the potential to actually 'live' in the world of *Guild Wars* could have the hardcore up in arms, the sacrifice means that players will never have to travel to the ends of the earth to join up with friends, and people can meet in the same location with the minimum of fuss. Just go to your world map, choose one of the locations currently available to you, click and you're there.

And it's not just travelling that's been adjusted to save players time either; everything else in *Guild Wars* is designed to give all gamers, from newcomers to seasoned users, the chance to dive straight in. The combat, for example, is an active affair requiring careful management of your character's abilities and attacks, much like *City Of Heroes*. However, the fact that victory is as dependent as much on skill as it is on the amount of experience you've built up is the real clincher. Choosing your character's profession from a selection of Warrior, Necromancer, Mesmer, Ranger, Monk and Elementalist is a key part of your progress, as it dictates the range of skills available to you as well as your position within any group you choose to join.

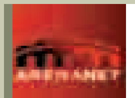
However, no one skill (out of over 400) is more powerful than another – instead, the strategy lies in which you take into battle. No matter how many skills you've mastered, only being able to choose a maximum of eight before each mission – in the same way as a Magic: The Gathering player refines their deck between each duel – places the onus on the gamer to plan ahead. Make the wrong decision and even the most experienced player can end up facing a crushing defeat.

The intention is to make *Guild Wars* the most accessible MMORPG ever – it will offer all manner of co-operative and player-versus-player tournaments and, best of all, will be free instead of having a monthly subscription. While comparisons to an MMORPG equivalent of *Diablo* might sound grand, the chances of the upcoming open beta being as successful as the one at E3 (over 200,000 players in 72 hours) suggest anything's possible.

STREAMING BLUE MURDER

Play *Guild Wars* for any length of time and you'll notice a small lightning bolt icon flash up at regular intervals. It's a sign that ArenaNet's own streaming technology is hard at work in the background to keep things ticking along smoothly. Constantly uploading and downloading information between your PC and the *Guild Wars* servers, the system works to keep you absorbed rather than reminding you you're playing a game. It continually updates your friends list, removes the need for lengthy patch updates by downloading them as you play and even fixes cheats or exploitation problems before they've been circulated… though we doubt it'll go so far as fixing your dinner or keeping you hydrated while you play.

"YOU DON'T HAVE TO PUT IN HOURS OF PLAY TO GET THE MOST OUT OF GUILD WARS – IT'S THE ANTITHESIS OF TRADITIONAL MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE RPGS"



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Founded by some of Blizzard's key members (specifically those behind *WarCraft*, *StarCraft* and *Diablo*, as well as the Battle.net gaming network), ArenaNet is a developer dedicated to creating a state-of-the-art network specialising in massively multiplayer online gaming. Hopefully, the company's experience will help it to revolutionise the genre.

HISTORY

GUILD WARS is the first game from ArenaNet

"GUILD WARS IS FOCUSED ON WHAT'S FUN IN AN RPG: FIGHTING MONSTERS, COMPLETING QUESTS AND FINDING THAT NEXT GREAT ITEM"
NCSOFT PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

BIG UP THE ONLINE MASSIVE

EVERQUEST – GRINDING x FREE! = GUILD WARS

The skills you learn have roughly the same level of power – it's how you use them that counts.

The best thing about *Guild Wars*? No monthly charges. Well, and the action. And the freedom. And the tournaments…

STAR FOX



The Landmaster Tank is undoubtedly the highlight of the planet surface levels.

"SWITCH BETWEEN FLYING AN ARWING, DRIVING A LANDMASTER TANK OR ENGAGING THE ENEMY ON FOOT AS YOU BATTLE MERCILESS ENEMIES"
NINTENDO.COM

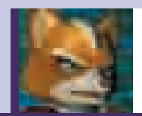
VIDEOGAMES MATHS

IS THE WORLD READY FOR 21ST CENTURY FOX?

LYLAT WARS + JET FORCE GEMINI x CO-OPERATION = STAR FOX



STAR FOX
GAMECUBE



CHARACTER PROFILE
■ Fox McCloud is leader of the Star Fox team and, with his trusty wingmen Peppy, Falco and, of course, Slippy Toad (why doesn't he have his own game yet?), has saved the universe from destruction several times. Somehow, he also finds time to have adventures of his own and beat up Donkey Kong and Kirby…

HISTORY
- **STAR FOX ADVENTURES** 2002 [Cube]
- **SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE** 2002 [Cube]
- **LYLAT WARS** 1997 [N64]

MUTANTS, ALIENS AND TOADS BEWARE

Taking a popular series in new directions through different genres is a risky business. Core tries to put stealth into parts of *Tomb Raider*, for example, and one of the biggest franchises in gaming goes down the pan. Still, Nintendo and Namco seem sure that now is the right time for Fox McCloud to stretch his legs (literally and metaphorically), and without wanting to sound like the nonsensical *Pro Evo* ramblings of Trevor Brooking, *Star Fox* really is a game of three halves.

First stop, the familiar. What we've seen of the classic *Star Fox* action remains true enough to the old formula – it worked some ten years ago when the first game was released and it still holds together today. So far, these are the most impressive sections cosmetically and in terms of control but we can't help feel that a little of the old magic just isn't there. Hopefully, this is more to do with the early build we played than the game itself, and with the title expected to ship in the US before the year is out, we shouldn't be far away from finding out for sure.

> "ON-FOOT SECTIONS BEAR MORE SIMILARITIES TO JET FORCE GEMINI THAN TO ANYTHING ELSE THAT NINTENDO HAS SERVED UP IN RECENT YEARS"

For other sections of the game, Namco's decision to kick Fox out of his Arwing and send him scurrying around on the ground is the one that troubles us most. As much as these levels will break up the interstellar gunplay, they bear more similarities to *Jet Force Gemini* than to anything else Nintendo has served up in recent years. The jury is still out on these parts; so far out, in fact, that it may not come back…

The idea is fine – blast anything that moves while hunting power-ups and vehicles – but control feels sloppy, especially when trying to pick off distant foes. We're hoping this is tightened up as it would be a shame to have these sections put a damper on what could be a great title, but it's going to take the right balance of flight and running around to make the whole *Star Fox* adventure really gel.

Lastly comes the multiplayer aspect of the game, a bizarre amalgamation of the on-foot and flight sections that gives players the opportunity to switch vehicles at will or even take on the world as a well-armed pedestrian. As *Lylat Wars* fans will tell you, multiplayer battles have never been the most balanced of affairs but this is partly addressed by the vehicular freedom. The experience is something a little different to the norm and, as such, it's not really fair to shower it with criticism; suffice to say that the aiming difficulties that are apparent in parts of the single-player game still exist in split-screen play.

But by far the most exciting prospects are those yet to be shown by a surprisingly reticent Nintendo. As well as a lengthy single-player adventure, we're assured co-operative play will be possible throughout, either as up to four fighters in split-screen play or by sharing vehicles with team-mates in pilot/gunner combinations. We don't doubt that if this is able to maintain a solid frame rate and is balanced enough, it'll be one of the game's best features, but in an industry that's developing a worrying trend of pre-release secrecy, it looks like we'll have to wait until we've got the game in our paws before we find out.

WHAT IF…?
All it would have taken is for a slightly different set of decisions to have been taken over the past couple of years and *Star Fox* could have been that stuff of dreams. Imagine a large-scale online service for the GameCube where gamers would be enjoying the likes of *Mario Kart* and *1080°* with others around the world until the release of *Star Fox*, one of Nintendo's games which would undoubtedly fare best in an online environment. With no updates of the likes of *StarLancer* or *Colony Wars* in sight for this generation (more's the pity), something like this would be the perfect title to fill the void of space shooters but, alas, we're left to cry on Slippy's shoulder about what could have been.

DETAILS
FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
DEVELOPER: Namco
RELEASE: 2005
GENRE: Shoot-'Em-Up
PLAYERS: 1-4

■ Combining familiar flight missions with on-foot thrills, Namco is trying to remain true to *Star Fox*'s roots while adding a little magic of its own.



■ As well as going head-to-head, the finished game will offer several unique co-op options.

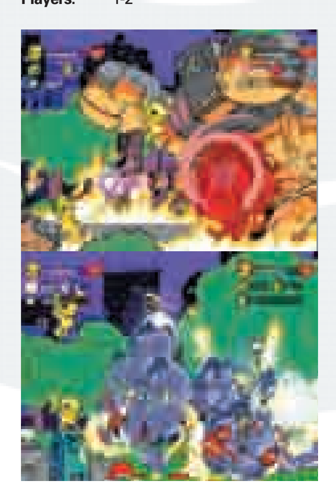
SHOWCASE

MORE THINGS TO WATCH FOR ON THE GAMING HORIZON

Alien Hominid

HAND-DRAWN HI-JINKS AHOY

Format: GameCube, PS2
Origin: US
Publisher: O3
Developer: The Behemoth
Genre: Shoot-'Em-Up
Players: 1-2



There's no denying that the appeal of retro 2D shooters will never fade, so it's good to see that developers realise this and are attempting to give us exactly what we want. Picking up where 2D gaming left off in the mid-Nineties, *Alien Hominid* is the result of a self-funded project completed by small US developer The Behemoth. Originally a simple web game that enjoyed many downloads, *Hominid* is currently looking a little like *Metal Slug* meets *Viewtiful Joe* and promises to be just as manic as the two put together. An alien being trying to reclaim his ship may not be the most original story we've ever heard of but the movies and screens we've seen certainly show some creative looks and gameplay.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '05

Wanda to Kyozou

WELCOME TO THE LAND OF THE GIANTS

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: SCE
Developer: Fuse Games
Genre: Action/Adventure
Players: 1



Gamers, rejoice – the creator of *Ico*, Fumita Ueda, has finally announced his latest project. Of course, the big surprise (at least in terms of what everyone was expecting) is that it's not a sequel to our favourite PS2 game. Instead, *Wanda to Kyozou* (or, literally translated, *Wanda And The Colossus*) appears to be an entirely new game with a very familiar art style. Not surprisingly, Ueda-san is keeping very quiet about the game until the Tokyo Game Show which, while we write this, is two weeks away. That hasn't stopped the speculation, of course – you're the giant… no, the girl… no, the *horse* – but as we're not the kind of people who make wild guesses, you'll have to make do with screenshots until next issue.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '05

Desperados 2: Cooper's Revenge

SPELLBOUND COMES TO ITS SENSES

Format: PC
Origin: Germany
Publisher: TBA
Developer: Spellbound Studios
Genre: RTS
Players: 1



With *Red Dead Revolver* currently ruling the Western roost, Spellbound Studios clearly has its work cut out with *Desperados 2*. *Cooper's Revenge* maintains some of the real-time strategy used in the original *Desperados* game, while adding more than a few new touches to take the series a step further. The isometric view, for instance, is now set off against an optional 3D third-person angle that can be used for shoot-outs and fight sequences, while over 20 new actions have been added for your characters to perform, not to mention new faces such as Hawkeyes the Indian. Hopefully, *Desperados 2* will prove to be at least as enjoyable as the last game – just so long as it's nothing like *Chicago 1930*.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '05

Dragonshard

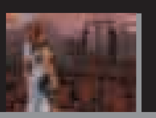
HOW MUCH OF A DRAGON IS A SHARD, THEN?

Format: PC
Origin: US
Publisher: Atari
Developer: Liquid
Genre: RTS
Players: TBC



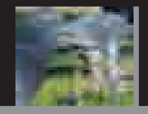
When you think about fantasy in videogames, *Dungeons & Dragons* immediately springs to mind. When you think about RTS games, acclaimed developer and the creator of the original *Command & Conquer* Liquid seems the obvious choice, so it can only be a good thing that *Dragonshard* has brought these two together and is keen to provide an RTS experience like no other. Players will have a choice between three warring factions, each of which will have their have their own place in the suitably epic storyline and a huge number of troops at their disposal. Whether *Dragonshard* will deliver is open to debate, but at least it'll make a pleasant change from fighting WWII over and over again.

RELEASE DATE: Q1 '05



Canned Dragon Empires [PC]

■ Despite receiving incredible support from its online community, development on Codemasters' epic MMORPG has been halted due to technical issues.



Canned ChibiRobo [GameCube]

■ Plans to release the surreal point-and-click robot adventure have now been completely cancelled. Shame really – we were quite looking forward to it.

Starship Troopers

EMPIRE HAS A LICENCE TO KILL

Format: PC
Origin: UK
Publisher: Empire Interactive
Developer: In-house
Genre: FPS
Players: TBC



***Starship Troopers* is a title that we're unsure whether to be excited about or not.** We have to admit that – much like *Chronicles Of Riddick* – the film licence is a perfect match for an FPS and has the potential to be something great, but the fact that Empire seems to be in no great rush to get it released could mean any number of things. Still, what we've heard speaks for itself in terms of potential. Thanks to the new engine by Strangelite, the game will be able to handle literally hundreds of enemy creatures on screen at any one time, which is sure to lead to some very impressive and frantic Bug battles. Or at least, that's what we're being told. Until we actually have a chance to get our hands on it, though, we'll reserve judgement.

RELEASE DATE: Q2 '05

25 To Life

GUILTY AS CHARGED, M'LUD

Format: PlayStation2, Xbox
Origin: US
Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Avalanche Software
Genre: Action Adventure
Players: 1 (1-16 Online)





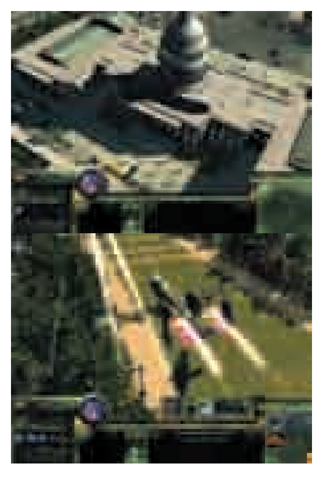
"The essence of cops and robbers, with the attitude and lifestyle of street culture." So speaks Eidos's press release for *25 To Life*, a title offering gamers the chance to play as either the police or the gangsters in a ghetto-style environment. Despite not sounding like anything special, the big selling point is the game's online support – offering up to 16-player multiplayer gameplay (the specifics of which have yet to be defined, though we wouldn't rule out gang-based deathmatch action) with USB headset support it's a step above anything that Rockstar has tried to do so far with *GTA*. Of course, whether that's a good thing or not, going by the recent media panic over violent games, remains to be seen.

RELEASE DATE: Q1 '05

Act Of War: Direct Action

AN RTS WE'VE ALL READ ABOUT

Format: PC
Origin: France
Publisher: Atari
Developer: Eugen Systems
Genre: RTS
Players: TBC



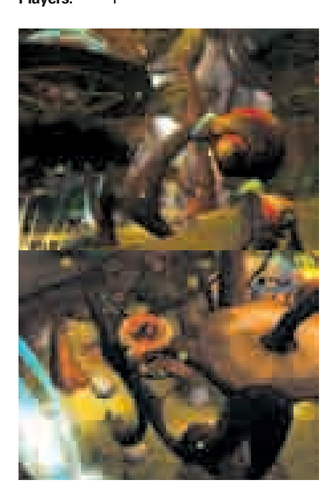
With the world now trembling with thoughts of recent conflicts and what the future may hold, it was only a matter of time before an RTS would be created to cash in on these fears. *Direct Action* will allow the player to participate in a modern-day war involving oil prices and a struggling global economy – a story that could have been ripped straight from today's headlines. Action-packed, with extensive multiplayer and single-player modes and complete with an eerily believable story created in co-operation with former US Air Force captain Dale Brown (author of 11 consecutive *New York Times* best-selling military-action-aviation adventure novels), this could be an RTS that's well worth the wait.

RELEASE DATE: Q2 '05

Psychonauts

DOUBLE FINE STARTS PLAYING MIND GAMES

Format: PC, Xbox
Origin: US
Publisher: Majesco
Developer: Double Fine
Genre: Adventure
Players: 1





In a world where everything makes a little too much sense, it's good to know *Psychonauts* is once again on the way. Created by Tim Schafer – the visionary designer of award-winning titles *Grim Fandango* and *Full Throttle* – *Psychonauts* promises to be a twisted tale of telepathy and mind manipulation (which, as those of you who know us will be aware, is our favourite kind of story). Taking control of Raz, you'll have to use your various psychic abilities to enter enemies' minds and battle against their inner demons and fears in order to tame them and bring them round to your way of thinking without losing your own sanity. With Majesco picking up the publishing rights, we can look forward to seeing this next year.

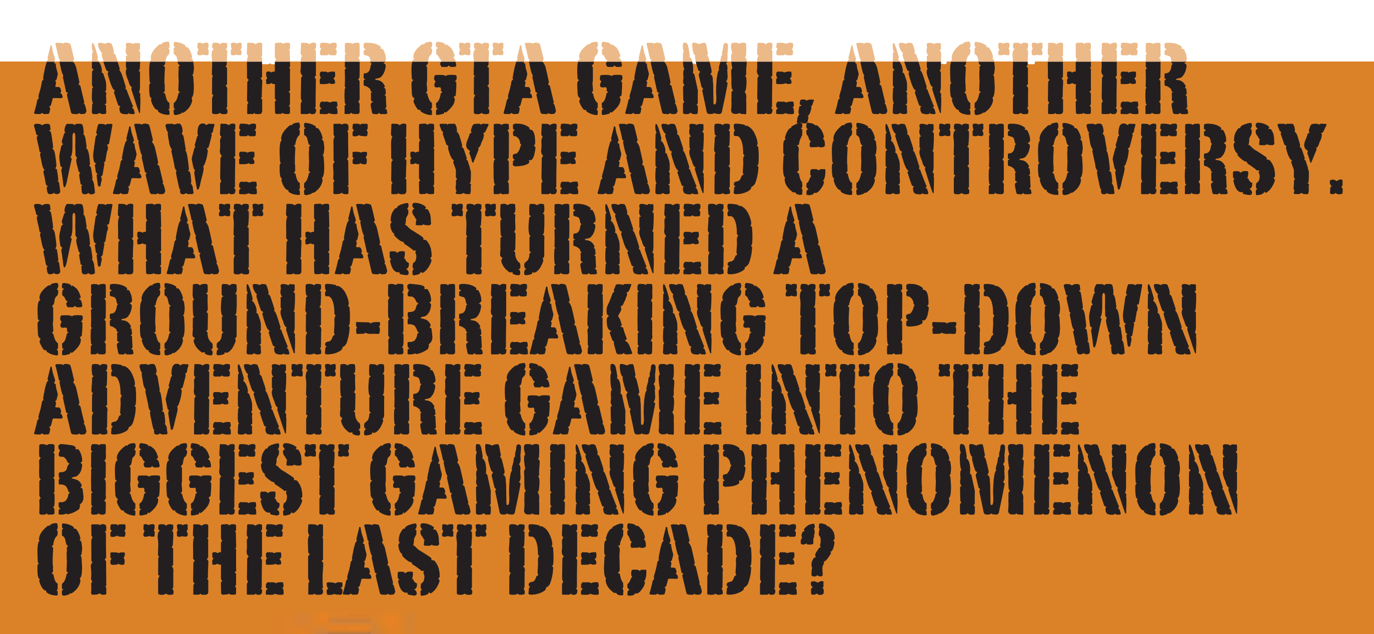
RELEASE DATE: TBA '05


TOP
ROUND 2
1P 15930
x0



He's bad, he's bad, you know it **Moonwalker Arcade [Sega] 1990**


THERE GO
NEIGHBO



ANOTHER GTA GAME, ANOTHER WAVE OF HYPE AND CONTROVERSY. WHAT HAS TURNED A GROUND-BREAKING TOP-DOWN ADVENTURE GAME INTO THE BIGGEST GAMING PHENOMENON OF THE LAST DECADE?

In an industry that has predominantly relied on colourful, camp mascots to formulate a console's identity and generate brand loyalty, it's interesting to see that cheery characters no longer maintain the interest of the games-playing public as they once did. Instead, as the age of the average games player rises, their interest is being held by a new breed of game – something that ensures they continue to play games as they venture into adulthood, instead of simply discarding them as they've done with so many 'toys' before.

The embodiment of this new breed of game is *Grand Theft Auto*, suitably satisfying the urges of an ever-maturing fan base. While 'hardcore' gamers will always have room in their hearts for the likes of Sonic and his peppy animal chums or Mario and his Mushrooms and Fire Flowers, the mass market is being turned on by a more gritty and realistic style of game – an experience that only games like *Grand Theft Auto* can offer.

No other series of this generation has matched its relentless selling pace. Over 30 million sales prove the *GTA* franchise is giving gamers exactly what they want. It's the biggest franchise in the world right now and its latest instalment is just around the corner, promising to be the best *GTA* game yet – a promise it's looking likely to fulfil with ease.

But it wasn't always this way. It's sometimes easy to forget that *Grand Theft Auto* began life as a simple, quirky, top-down 2D adventure game, lacking much of the graphical detail presented in today's epics – a game that, had Rockstar North not played its cards right, could have been brushed under the carpet permanently. It all started in 1997, when after almost four years



"DESPITE LOOKING MORE LIKE A BUDGET MEGA DRIVE GAME THAN A BOUNDARY-PUSHING 32-BIT WONDER, THE FIRST GTA DIDN'T LET ITS GRAPHICS HAMPER ITS SUCCESS"

Word of mouth helped persuade gamers put off by *GTA*'s graphical style to give the game a try.

of development, small Scottish development outfit DMA Design (best known at that point for *Lemmings* and *Unirally*) and publisher Take 2 Interactive launched *Grand Theft Auto* onto PC and subsequently PlayStation.

At a time when 3D was the latest big thing, *Grand Theft Auto* featured a 'brave' top-down, bird's-eye-view graphical style that looked shaggy and crude compared to ground-breaking games of the time. However, even though 3D was fast becoming the norm – with games such *Tomb Raider* wowing gamers with revolutionary three-dimensional levels – constructing genuine free-roaming 3D environments where players could venture for miles in any direction without being limited in some way was a difficult task for any developer. "If we could have made the first game 3D we would have," explains Brian Baglow, one of the writers on the original *GTA*, "but given the power of PCs and the original PlayStation, there was no way we could have made it run at a playable rate." Later games such as *Driver* overcame technical headaches, allowing gamers to drive anywhere in a fully 3D land, but for *Grand Theft Auto* the task was something DMA didn't undertake, opting for a quick and easy way of constructing the game.

Luckily, the ugliness of the original *GTA* didn't harm its eventual success. Despite looking more like a budget Mega Drive game than a boundary-pushing 32-bit wonder, word soon spread about exactly what you could get up to within the confines of this unsophisticated looking world. This ensured that those graphics snobs who initially turned their noses up at *GTA* gave it a second chance to impress. Which it did, as gamers became transfixed with the idea of stealing cars, running over pedestrians and answering ringing telephones in order to initiate one of the many (and often humorous) missions. Players became less concerned with the graphical limitation as they used their imaginations to interpret the simple on-screen graphical representations of violence and crime. It was all just so simple, but so addictive thanks to the freedom. "You're in a world where you can pretty much do as you wish," emphasises Baglow, illustrating the game's major hook.

As well as the violent gameplay, *GTA* also became famous for radio stations. Hijacking someone's car meant players were treated to the radio station chosen by the original occupant as well as acquiring their wheels. Channels varied by genre and differed depending on the style of car – pick-up wagons would be tuned to a country and western station, for instance. The radio programmes didn't feature licensed songs, instead playing spoof tracks with comedy lyrics, with suitably wacky comments from DJs weaved in between. It was an impressive feature for the time and has become a true *GTA* trademark. As Terry Donovan, CEO of Rockstar Games, recently


The original *Grand Theft Auto*. It was still engaging, despite the top-down view, but look how far we've come…

stated: "The in-game radio stations featured in *Grand Theft Auto* have been one of the most celebrated and revolutionary aspects of the game since its inception."

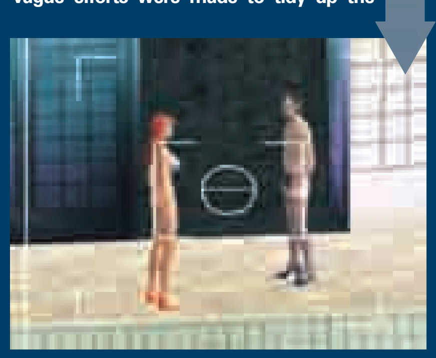
PLAY NICE

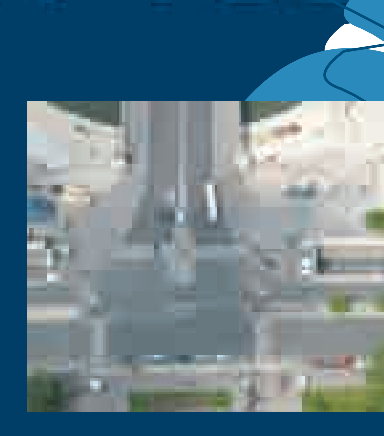
Although *GTA* was presented fairly simplistically, its violent content was always going to turn a few heads. Even in this new millennium, some people still see videogames as being toys for children, and back in 1997, this opinion was even more prevalent. Parents and politicians were outraged by *GTA*, assuming children would be playing the game despite it receiving appropriate age ratings (BBFC 18 in the UK, M for mature in the US), suitably marking its adult status. US senator Joe Lieberman described *GTA* as "graphic, gruesome and grotesque," even though it's undeniably cartoony and not all that 'graphic' (though we're all apparently desensitised these days, so what do we know?).

Still, the spectacle – and resulting free publicity – generated by those wishing to condemn the game boosted sales and prompted Take 2 to take notice of this new goldmine on its hands. In direct response to the controversy, Take 2 founder Ryan Bryant decided to set up Rockstar Games, a brand Take 2 would use to publish its more 'edgy' titles while continuing to publish family titles under the Take 2 name. Ryan Bryant hired Terry Donovan as Rockstar CEO and Sam Houser as president to set up the new company, and thus Rockstar was born. To make the move complete, Take 2 bought DMA Design, changing its name to Rockstar North in the process.

Before the dust could settle, *Grand Theft Auto: London* was released. With *GTA* primarily being a PC franchise at the time (with PlayStation conversions coming second), *GTA: London* took the form of an add-on pack rather than a brand new game, simply offering new missions and a facelift while maintaining the same controls and gameplay as before. This was annoying for PlayStation owners, who griped once again about the awkward and illogical way in which they had to 'drive' their on-foot character (players had to use X to walk forwards, Triangle to walk backwards and rotated their direction with the D-pad – the same method used for driving). An add-on pack was all well and good, but a proper sequel was always a certainty – after all, you don't form a new publishing arm and buy a development studio just for the fun of it.

GTA2 remained a top-down affair but vague efforts were made to tidy up the





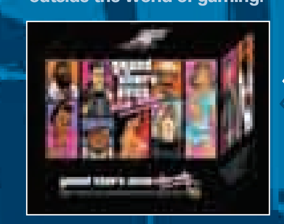


SOUNDS LIKE A ROCKSTAR

The early *GTA* games featured crazy, fictional works of musical genius; *GTAIII* sported licensed songs; and *Vice City* turned it all on its head by compiling a stunning collection of Eighties hits from different genres, with a soundtrack box set taking up residence in music stores.

For *GTA: San Andreas*, Rockstar has partnered with Interscope Records to provide an array of early Nineties west-coast tracks. "Fans can expect the soundtrack to cover a full spectrum of music genres and reflect the sound, vibe and feel of the FM radio dial from that period," says Terry Donovan. The early Nineties were the glory years for Interscope/Death Row records, so expect classic 'G-funk' tunes from Dr Dre, Snoop Dogg and the many other artists collected under the label – we heard first-hand Dr Dre's 'Nuthin' But A 'G' Thang' playing in the background when taking a look at *San Andreas* on a trip to Rockstar's New York office.

GTA: San Andreas will also follow *Vice City*'s lead by releasing soundtrack albums to coincide with the game's release, further ensuring Rockstar gets a reputation outside the world of gaming.

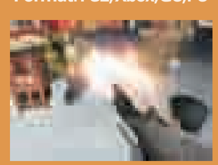


IMITATION OF LIFE

When games come along with new ideas and make loads of money in the process, it's only natural that other companies will want to hurriedly produce their own variations. If it wasn't for *Grand Theft Auto*, we might not have seen any of these efforts…

TRUE CRIME

Format: PS2, Xbox, GC, PC



While copying the basic idea of *Grand Theft Auto*, *True Crime: Streets Of L.A.* mixed things up a bit and changed a few key elements – specifically, having you play the part of a cop, placing you on the side of the law rather than someone wishing to climb the gangster tree. *True Crime* also incorporated character development features. As you went through the game, your character's ability built up in certain areas through the accumulation of reward points. This is similar to – though not anywhere near the scale of – the character tinkering available in *GTA: San Andreas*.

THE GETAWAY

Format: PS2



One of the most obvious *GTA*-inspired titles is *The Getaway*. Instead of a fictional US city, the game is set in an accurate representation of London. The plot is simple: complete missions in order to rescue your kidnapped son and avenge the death of your missus. Aside from that, you can waste time driving around London tourist hotspots, or revisit places you consider memorable in real life and to mutter to yourself: "Oh look, that's where I took my ex on our first date" and "there's where that tramp stole my iPod and licked my face".

DRIV3R

Format: PS2, Xbox



Currently still seen as the biggest videogame joke this millennium, *Driv3r* is the third in a series that was actually a free-roaming 3D game before *Grand Theft Auto* arrived on the scene. However, it was free-roaming in a car only – going on foot was not an option. While early *GTA* titles may have taken inspiration from *Driver*'s 3D engine, it was *GTA* setting the rules by the time *GTAIII* and *Vice City* arrived – then it was *Driv3r* that was playing catch-up. And who knows, maybe this bug-riddled, over-hyped game would have stood a chance if it had actually been finished when it was released…

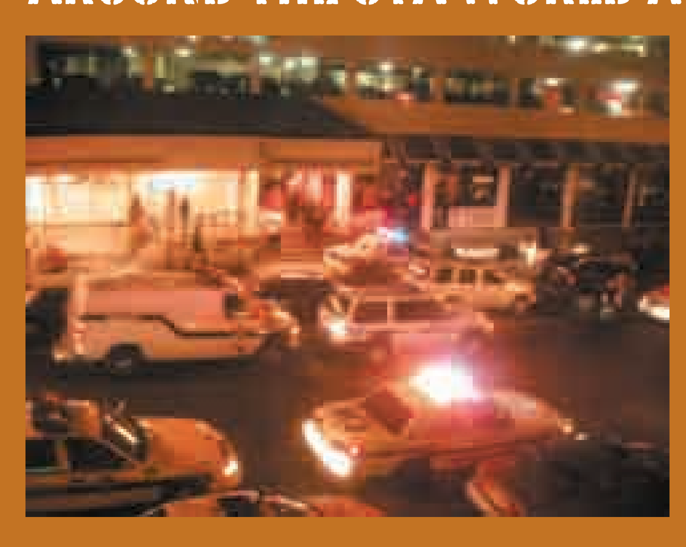
graphics, with better textures and some nice lighting effects accompanying explosions. Rather than simply assuming the role of someone wishing to pimp themselves up the crime pecking order, *GTA2* introduced the concept of Respect (something that's been revisited in *San Andreas*), with the player being challenged to earn it by doing jobs for gangs. However, with the gangs at war, helping out one group would often threaten your position with the other – as such, players were constantly challenged to think carefully about which missions to choose and how to balance out their activity within the game.

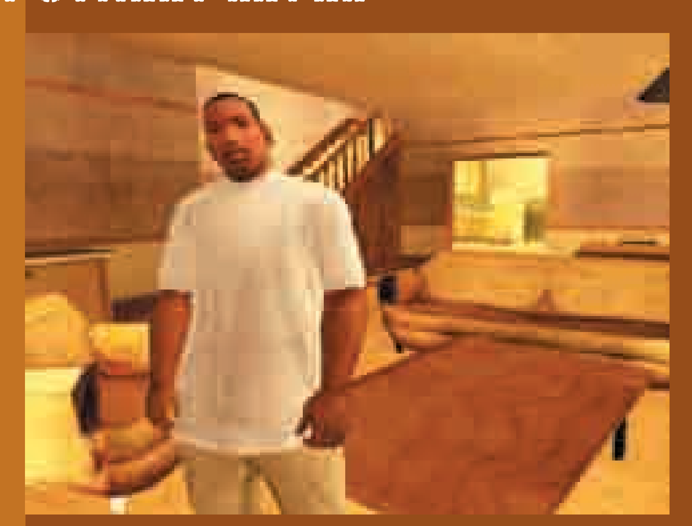
THE REVOLUTION WILL BE TELEVISED

With the arrival of PlayStation2 and the extra power on offer, Rockstar North set to work on the first game in the series to go truly 3D. For the first time players would be able to actually walk about the *GTA* world at street level. *Grand Theft Auto III* was a sensation. While the object of the game remained pretty much the same as the first *GTA* title – answer a phone, start a mission, kill people, climb the crime ladder – it was presented in a completely different way. "The game evolved from the original, but the essential core experience was still the same," explains Baglow. Players no longer had to use their imagination – they could see everything they had visualised when playing the original *GTA* in an up-close 3D format. It was all there and players loved it.

With all this extra detail came the potential to add more specific features to the game that couldn't necessarily be represented correctly in a top-down format – such as the infinitely famous way in which you could regenerate your health. As if you don't already know, you could invite a

"GRAND THEFT AUTO III WAS A SENSATION – FOR THE FIRST TIME, PLAYERS WERE ABLE TO ACTUALLY WALK AROUND THE GTA WORLD AT STREET LEVEL"







prostitute into your car and, having driven to a secluded location, 'get a little groove on'. Your cash would drain, your health would rise and the car would bounce – it was beautiful. If that wasn't enough, you could – if you wanted – beat the prostitute to death in order to get your money back.

While sitting back, regaining your health, you could now listen to a radio featuring licensed songs. The humorous commentary remained, but instead of mad comedy tunes designed specifically for the game, players were treated to real songs, including a few taken from the soundtrack of Al Pacino movie, *Scarface*. That crossover is significant not only if you consider the Miami setting of *GTAIII*'s follow-up, *Vice City*, but more importantly because of the controversy both the film and the game attracted. Reviled by some, revered by others, the glamorisation of violence (among other things) perpetuated by the two titles has earned them cult status… not to mention howls of protest.

Unsurprisingly, like the first game, *GTAIII* frequently found itself in the firing line from those opposed to its content. Australia initially banned the game until Rockstar agreed to rework the portions causing the most offence. Still, *GTAIII* was a game featuring violence as a principle foundation and there was no getting away from it. Sam Houser made the point that how people acted within the game was their own choice: "We try to put people in a world, let the world exist around them and then let them make their own decisions," he explained. "If you want to go out there

BRING THE NOISE

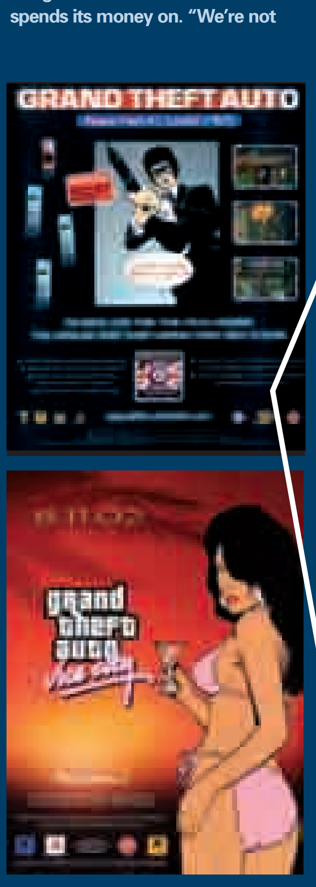
Grand Theft Auto's success wasn't only achieved by introducing a new gameplay concept and tons of freedom – advertising played a massive part, too.

Coming from music industry backgrounds, Rockstar founders Terry Donovan and Sam Houser had a different approach to advertising from the start and a specific idea about who Rockstar's games were aimed at. Speaking to Wired.com, Donovan explained: "If you've got 30 million households with PlayStations, you aren't just dealing with kids any more."

Donovan and Houser had a clear objective to market Rockstar's games like movies or music. "The videogame industry is where the music industry was in 1960," explained Donovan. "There are still relatively unpolished marketing techniques."

Looking to do things better, they targeted an older demographic and marketed Rockstar games in a stylish, 'streetwise' manner, and as a result the Rockstar brand has become almost as important as its main gaming franchise. Rockstar barely sees itself as just another videogame publisher any more. Its competition isn't other, more family-oriented videogames from the likes of Nintendo; the way Donovan sees it the competition is all the other things Rockstar's intended audience spends its money on. "We're not competing with Konami, Hasbro, or Mattel," he explains. "We're competing with Def Jam, Adidas and New Line Cinema."

This belief that *GTA* and the rest of Rockstar's catalogue are as important to 20-something men as any new album, item of clothing or recent DVD release is what sets Rockstar apart from other videogame publishers still restricting themselves to the gaming sphere. Well, that and the high sales of course.



and use a gun and do bad things you can. But, at the same time, if you want to go round there, just cruise and get in a car, get on a motorbike or just meet people, you can." Although spirited, this argument isn't entirely convincing purely because you do have to be bad. The game is about climbing the crime ladder and to do this you have to commit crime. While it is possible to exist in the game world without harming anyone, you can't progress through the game this way and if you refuse to engage in any violent act you're avoiding the very elements that make the game fun to begin with. Whichever way you look at it, *GTAIII* requires players to commit crimes in order to complete the game and extract full enjoyment. Of course, this doesn't make it bad, or worthy of the kind of accusations aimed at it. Yet despite this, the regular focus on the effects games have on children continues – especially when two young children use the game as a blueprint for their own real-life criminal exploits.

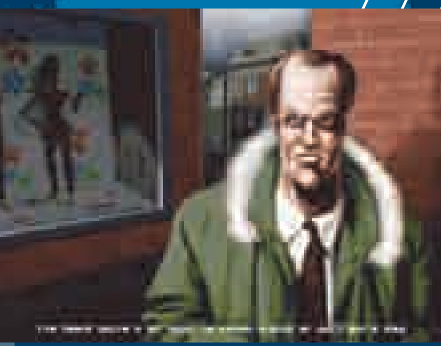
In June 2003, 16-year-old William Buckner and his stepbrother Joshua (aged just 13) took two rifles from their home in Tennessee and proceeded to shoot at passing traffic from the safety of nearby trees. A man was killed and a woman injured as a result. Convicted of reckless homicide and sent to a detention centre, the boys had told investigators they got the idea from *GTAIII*. Miami attorney Jack Thompson, who had previously been working to establish links between violent games and several other killings committed by teenagers, represented the victims' families, claiming $100 million in damages. "We are suing the boys, their parents, WalMart who sold the game, and the videogame companies, including Rockstar, that are responsible for designing a game that they knew would result in these type of consequences," Thompson told the BBC.

While logic would suggest WalMart could be held accountable for irresponsibly selling the game to someone underage, suggesting Rockstar North developed the game with murder in mind immediately shatters Thompson's case. However, he wasn't alone. Another Miami attorney, Barry Silver, representing

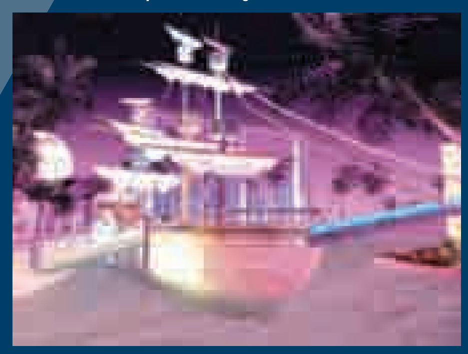
" YOU COULD INVITE A PROSTITUTE INTO YOUR CAR AND, HAVING DRIVEN TO A SECLUDED LOCATION, 'GET A LITTLE GROOVE ON'. YOUR CASH WOULD DRAIN, YOUR HEALTH WOULD RISE AND THE CAR WOULD BOUNCE – IT WAS BEAUTIFUL"

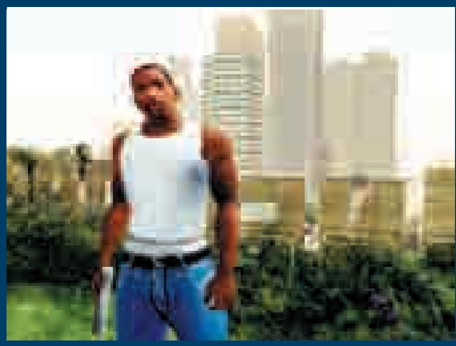






The *GTA* games have become synonymous with overtly stereotypical characters. But are they offensive or tongue-in-cheek? You decide…





The Eighties excess and glamour of *Vice City's* Miami has been replaced by *San Andreas's* west coast gangsta sensibilities.

several Haitian community groups upset by a mission in *GTAIII* sequel *Vice City* where players are required to hunt out and kill a Haitian gang, also had plenty to say. "When you find out what your kids are being exposed to you will shudder in horror," he claimed. "It's a training film for mass murderers and it has no place in anybody's home who cares anything about their kids." Once again, the message that the *Grand Theft Auto* series isn't for children needs repeating.

CAN YOU FEEL IT?

GTA: Vice City was released in 2002, just 18 months after *GTAIII* had been a runaway success. Set in Eighties Miami, the game used the now-trademark radio stations to provide literally albums and albums worth of retro tunes (a CD compilation box set was even released by Rockstar shortly after the game's launch, in a fine example of cross-media promotion). The game was heavily reminiscent of gangster epic *Scarface* and TV suave-o-thon *Miami Vice*, providing a massive amount of nostalgic charm for those old enough to remember first-hand the days where men wore bright T-shirts under flecked grey suit jackets. Gameplay wise, though, things remained the same – albeit on a much larger scale.

However, the true 'next step' of the series is just around the corner. With three massive cities and countryside locations – in all combining to be five times the size of *GTA: Vice City* – and actual character development options, *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* will easily be the best *GTA* game yet, as well as a massive leap from the very first game released seven years ago.

Given the popularity of the series, it's likely to be around for at least another seven years, and considering the increasing integration of online features, who knows where the series will be then? Perhaps we'll all be running our own gangs online, taking over other players' 'hoods' via drive-bys and assassinations in internet turf wars, until one leader is established and a whole online network and pecking order of virtual crime is in place. Players new to the game once such an empire has been forged could work their own way to the top in an entirely human-populated game world… or simply exist and survive by mugging other players and robbing their houses.

The possibilities are endless, and with the introduction of new technology the freedom and scale can only grow, as will the potential for violence. Imagine what the *Daily Mail* will have to say about that… END

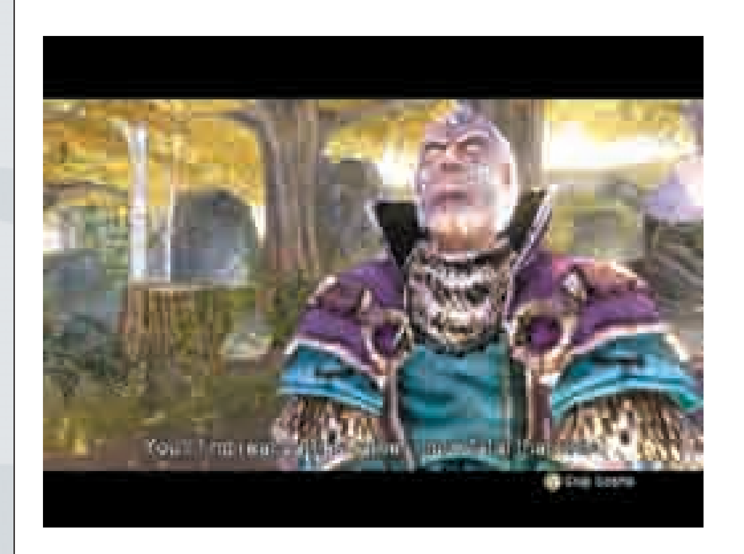




REVIEWS

THE AVERAGE

Despite representing an industry in which high scores mean everything, **games™** is not a magazine that marks with the majority. A lot of people think that anything below 7 (7.0, 70%, whatever) is a bad score – we don't. Going on a scale of one to ten, five is the average – average being a game that does what it sets out to do without attempting to do it better than anyone else. If a game gets five you'll get some enjoyment out of it but nothing more, simple as that. What's more, we won't be swayed by PR people telling us what a game's like – we only decide once we've played each game to death and, in the majority of cases, to completion. If a game's bad we'll make sure you know, if it's great we'll sing its praises. At the end of the day, we're just here to help you decide what's worth your hard-earned cash. After all, if it wasn't for you, we'd be out of a job.





DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Microsoft

DEVELOPER
Big Blue Box

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
8 October

PLAYERS
1

FABLE

DO WHAT YOU WANNA DO, PLAY HOW YOU WANNA PLAY, LIVE HOW YOU WANNA LIVE, SAY WHAT YOU WANNA SAY

In our lives we all make choices. Some are better than others but, ultimately, we have to carry our actions with us and they affect the person we become. This is what *Fable* is all about. Traditionally, RPGs exist to tell a story, some also experiment with freedom and give players multiple paths to reach their goal, but while *Fable* does both to a certain extent, they're not its reason for existing – it's all about developing your character.

In *Fable* you take the role of a young boy whose village gets pillaged by a group of bandits, leaving him without his parents or a home. Taken in by a man from the Heroes' Guild (an organisation in the business of cultivating, well, heroes), you eventually start hero training, suitably equipping you for the adventure ahead. Once your tuition is complete and you've turned from a young boy into an adult, you leave the confines of the Guild and go out into the world to take on missions for cash, search for answers to questions you have about your family, and, most importantly, start moulding your personality. Character development is the single most important factor in *Fable*. Or rather, it's the main reason to play. And you're developing your character right from the very start of the game.

Even before your village has been plundered and you've been taken into the Heroes' Guild training program, you're introduced to the kind of decisions you'll be making for the rest of the game. You start off needing money to buy your sister a present for her birthday. Your father – being an upstanding role model intending to guide you along the path of decency – agrees to pay you some cash for every good deed you do about the village. So off you wander in your merry, curious way doing the normal RPG thing of talking to people and working out how to solve their issues, ultimately acquiring gold pieces so you can progress. But where other RPGs simply provide you with a puzzle to be solved,



Despite being very scary to most, some women actually find this demon look a real turn-on.





When you're young, bandits come along and almost completely level your peaceful little town.

FAQs

Q. WHY BOTHER BEING GOOD?
Because it's harder and therefore much more rewarding.

Q. NO BRANCHING STORYLINES THEN?
Nope. It's all about how your character develops, not the story.

Q. SO, YOU CAN HAVE SEX?
Yes, but you don't see anything, you just hear amusing sounds.

games™

FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

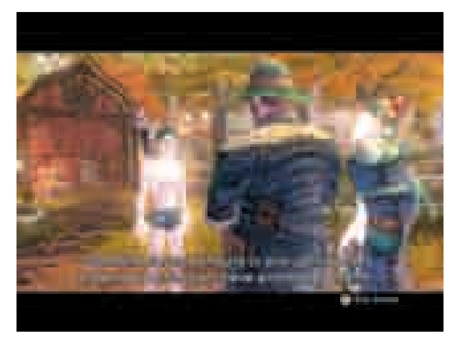
CHOOSE YOUR FATE: Choose to help people for no reward or rob people's houses for quick profit.

INTERACT: Find a girl, get her drunk, get married, then take her to the woods and kill her. If you want.

challenging you to work out the single route to overcoming it, *Fable* gives you more than one way to complete a task, with the choice you make shaping your character's development.

One of your earliest moral choices is when a local man asks you to look after his collection of barrels while he pops out on a bit of business. Aware this helpful act will earn you a gold piece from Daddy, you agree, and instantly become hounded by another child who – like a little devil sitting on your shoulder – urges you to break open the man's crates for a possible reward exceeding the single gold piece you stand to receive for the good deed. So, should you smash the crates, grab what you can and leg it, or should you do the right thing and wait for the man to return? Or maybe you could get the reward and then go back and smash up his crates anyway? There's no correct or incorrect answer – being deceitful won't hinder your progress, if anything, it makes it easier – all the game requires you to do is acquire enough gold pieces to buy your sister a present; how you do it is up to you. The only thing to consider is the consequence of your actions and the effect it will have on your character.

And the effects are many. Should you succumb to temptation, choosing the easiest and dirtiest routes to getting what you want, your character's appearance and reputation will adjust



accordingly. As with real life, when you chat up women, lead them into the woods and mercilessly butcher them because doing so makes you cackle with delight, people hear about it. So having committed atrocities of this nature, people will treat you with considerable distrust and caution. Your appearance will also change depending on your leaning towards good or evil, which makes sense; in real life we're all guilty of relying on someone's appearance to tell us what kind of person they are. On principle, we tend to avoid packs of Burberry-capped children or vested men who sit on park benches drinking high-percentage lager at nine in the morning. And if you choose to spend your time in *Fable* being aggressive and antisocial – and ultimately evil – your appearance transforms to reflect your preference, giving the pleasant townsfolk a chance of avoiding you, in the same way Burberry hats allow us to detect and avoid those we suspect will spit at our shoes and pester us for cigarettes.



EXPRESSIONS

When you start *Fable* as a young boy, you're given three Expressions that you can use whenever you like in front of any of the townspeople. You've got Giggle, Fart and Belch – typical childish actions. As you progress, you get given more Expressions. These range from further simple exchanges that do nothing except affect someone's perception of you, to more useful outlets like Flirt or Steal, which pretty much speak for themselves. More importantly, the manner in which you work through the game governs which Expressions you're given as you go further. Act negatively and you'll receive negative Expressions, act nice and you'll receive pleasant ones. This is yet another reason to play through the game a second time.

"SHOULD YOU CHOOSE THE EASIEST AND DIRTIEST WAYS OF GETTING WHAT YOU WANT, YOUR APPEARANCE AND REPUTATION WILL ADJUST ACCORDINGLY"





Spend your time taking what you want and killing people you shouldn't and this is the sort of person you'll become.

Being Evil in *Fable* transforms your character in a number of ways. Starting off pale and drawn, continued evil actions will see horns sprout from your head. And it doesn't end at bovine protrusions – you will emit a scarlet mist, flies will buzz around you and your eyes will glow bright red. But there is another way: manage to be good and you'll develop a halo instead of horns, and butterflies will flutter prettily around you, resulting in a warmer response from townsfolk.

"WHILE FABLE REVOLVES AROUND FREEDOM OF CHOICE, YOU CAN NEVER REALLY AFFECT THE ACTUAL STORY"

As you wander from town to town, you're given many things to do – most of which exist not to aid your progression through the story, but to simply develop your character. You can go into taverns and drink booze until you vomit all over yourself; you can chat up girls, get them drunk and eventually marry one per town (and kill them should you tire of their company); you can steal from any shops you pass; break into people's houses; punch children; get a haircut or tattoo; 'cleanse' entire towns in the same way as the bandits did to your village when you were young… So much is included and is all there to present you with choices (varying in moral complexity), rather than help you reach the end.



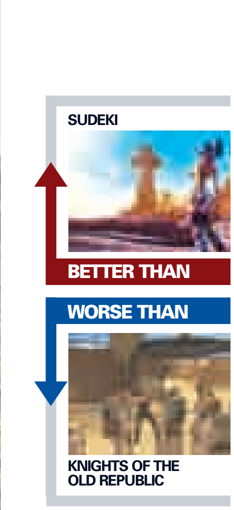
If you exercise patience and goodwill through the game you can eventually become this holy.

games™ FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

STORYTELLER: *Fable*'s backbone is a story of a boy's quest to become the world's greatest hero.

YIN YANG: When you're not chasing your destiny, *Fable* offers you moral choices and lifestyle options.



LEVELLING UP

Levelling up in *Fable* is not an automatic process like it is in other RPGs. As you wander the game's many areas, cutting up bad (or good) guys, you collect the green aura they leave behind, which you can use when you revisit the Heroes' Guild's levelling-up room. Having entered this den of green mist, you can choose exactly what you want to upgrade. Strength, Skill and Will are the areas you can improve, and your choice will affect what your character turns into. So if you want to create some beardy Merlin-esque character, for instance, give Will attributes more of an upgrade than everything else, and watch your character form appropriately. Don't fancy that? Then you can apply loads to your Strength and watch your character bulk up. As with everything else in *Fable*, the choice is yours.



As far as actually finishing the game goes, it's possible to do it in just nine hours – it's quite easy. As you do so you'll notice it's all relatively standard RPG fare – the storyline is fairly simple, lacking the substance of the real heart-tuggers within the genre such as *Final Fantasy VII*; the twists are obvious; and (unfortunately, despite what you may have expected) there's just one path through the game. While *Fable* revolves around freedom of choice, you can never affect the story beyond changing a bit of narration here and there – it's only when you reach the end that your choices combine to give you one of four possible endings. Like the story, the gameplay is nothing new. You wander narrow paths to reach connecting areas (like in *Phantasy Star Online*), invariably fighting groups of bandits and other enemies for experience points. But these simple game mechanics aren't what *Fable* is truly about, hence why they only take up a small portion of this review.

Fable, as we've said and will continue to point out, is about character development, playing the game your way and seeing what kind of person you become as a result of your choices. Players can choose to ignore this and continue with their quests, but this is ignoring the game's *raison d'être*. Completing the game and seeing all the story is not what makes *Fable* fun, and if you choose to rush through it you'll miss what it's all about. *Fable* is fun because it allows you to mirror your own 'true' personality within a fabricated world without the threat of going to prison. You can act as you wish and see the consequences of these actions on yourself and the world around you. Actually reaching the end isn't satisfying because you're clever enough to get there – it's fun because you see which closing movie your behaviour generates.

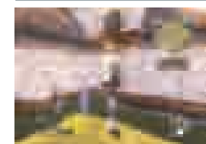
Ultimately, *Fable* is an intensely personal experience and one that's difficult to describe to someone else – you really have to allow yourself to become immersed within the boundaries of this twee little world to fully appreciate its magic and discover what it means to you. And, indeed, what it says about you…

VERDICT 8/10
ALMOST AS UNIQUE AS YOU ARE



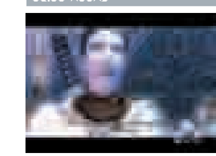
THE BEST BITS IN THE GAME AND WHEN YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE THEM

00:05 MINS



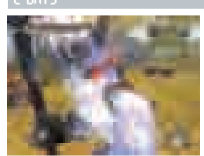
In your child form you've stumbled on a man speaking with his mistress. He offers you money not to tell his wife. You take the gold and go and tell her anyway.

02:00 HOURS

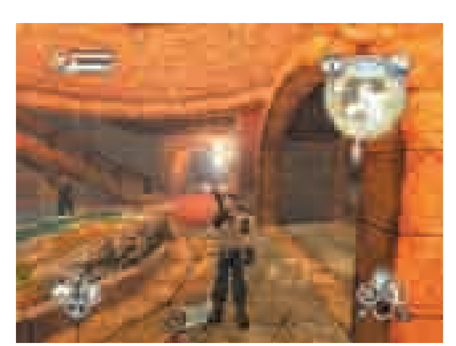


You're all grown up and off out into the world to perform heroic quests. You explore, finding temptation at every turn – you're starting to understand what *Fable* is about.

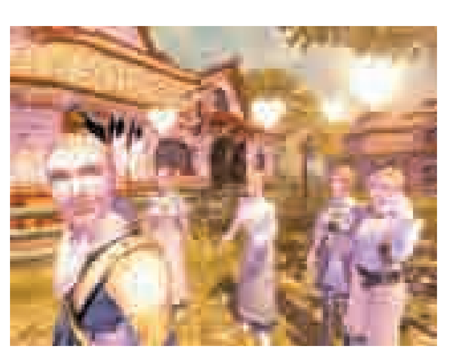
2 DAYS



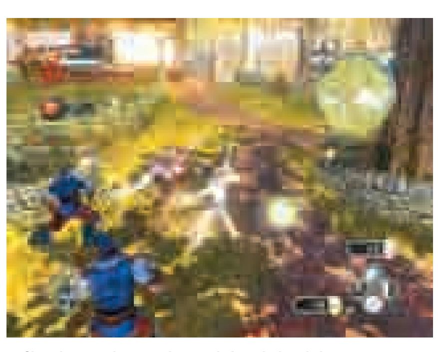
Your character has taken form and you're making it your own. You've either slipped into a world of darkness or one of illumination. How easily do you give in to temptation…?



You can't really influence the story but that's not why you'll play *Fable*.



Ladies love a hero, so sometimes it can pay to be a good guy.



Show how tough you are by completing missions in just your pants.

STAR WARS

With some average new films, the desecration of the original movies by the Special Editions, and more than a few sub-par videogames, it's becoming increasingly clear that slapping the *Star Wars* name on a product isn't the recipe for success it once was. On the game front, though, removing the promise of guaranteed sales is probably for the best – it forces developers to come up with a title worth buying. If you need proof, just ask Pandemic Studios. With its tiresome *Clone Wars* a strong example of licence complacency, it's a wonder the developer was given a second bite of the Jedi cherry at all. But if it hadn't have been given that chance, we might not have *Star Wars Battlefront* and that would be what's known as 'a bad thing'.

Perhaps *Battlefront* works so well because instead of fashioning some semblance of a game out of the movies, Pandemic has lovingly created a quality game before slotting all in the *Star Wars* elements. Common sense? Perhaps, but the difference it makes is still remarkable, if only because playing *Battlefront* for just a short while brings the realisation that the game would be just as playable and absorbing without a Jedi, Stormtrooper or Ewok in sight. Of course, more pessimistic gamers may think that's only to be expected, what with *Battlefront* borrowing more than a little of its gameplay style from EA's *Battlefield* titles…

Essentially, *Battlefront*'s premise is identical – two warring factions with multiple types of soldiers and vehicles fight it out

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PlayStation2, PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
Pandemic

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1 (1-16 Online)

FAQs

Q. A GOOD STAR WARS GAME?
Oh yes. Together with *Knights Of The Old Republic* and *Rogue Leader* this brings the total of decent games on current consoles to three.

Q. ONLY ONLINE?
Surprisingly, no – *Battlefront*'s single-player mode is actually quite enjoyable, even if it only presents a real challenge on the highest difficulty setting.

Q. ANY GUNGANS?
Only in the form of AI bots, thankfully. This means there's a horde of Jar-Jar Binks look-alikes for you to blast into messy chunks, rather than having to actually 'be' one.

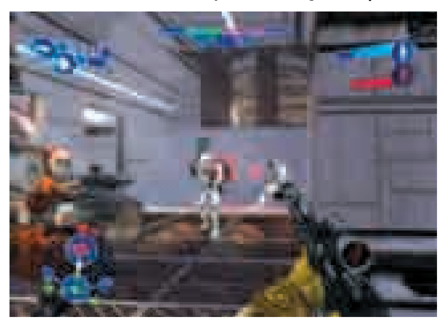
games™ FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

CIRCA 1942: *Battlefront*'s gameplay is tried and tested, thanks to PC titles like *Team Fortress*.

FORCE IT OUT: The *Star Wars* styling really stands out – the game is good, but little things make it great.

Taking down vehicles requires some heavy artillery, although carrying a rocket launcher around leaves you vulnerable against troops.





Soaring around with the Republic Jet Trooper's rocket pack can give you a tactical advantage or turn you into a giant flying target…



AT-ATs act as moveable spawn points, so they need to be dealt with quickly.



Capturing Command Posts is always the primary goal but some stages have secondary tasks, like destroying those Gungan shield generators.

BATTLEFRONT

"THAT'S NO MOON – IT'S A DECENT STAR WARS GAME"



Many of the game's areas are lovely to look at; the rain-soaked exterior of Kamino, for instance, is incredibly atmospheric.

across a range of sprawling combat zones, with the primary objective being to take control of key checkpoints until the opposition is wiped off the map. The only key differences are cursory, with the *Star Wars* angle allowing for minor modifications: checkpoints become Command Posts, Death Tickets (the counter that depletes as your side is killed or loses ground) become reinforcements and several arenas even come with their own inhabitants to create an additional threat, such as Tusken Raiders and Jawas on Tatooine, Gungans on Naboo and Ewoks on Endor. The replication of the gameplay may be undeniable, but that's not to say that Pandemic hasn't worked hard to perfect what is an almost faultless conversion of a long-running PC series to the home consoles.

Despite taking its template from a style of game traditionally seen as a predominantly online multiplayer effort, *Battlefront*'s single-player modes are surprisingly solid and playable. Although the option to be thrown straight into the thick of things provides a temporary distraction, it's the Historical Campaign and Galactic Conquest modes that really bolster things for lone players. Between the former offering a series of planet-to-planet battles that see you switch between the forces of good and evil, and the latter's seductive mix of tense firefights and strategic planning as you reclaim the galaxy, it's all good – even if only the hardest difficulty offers any kind of AI experience akin to that of playing the game online.

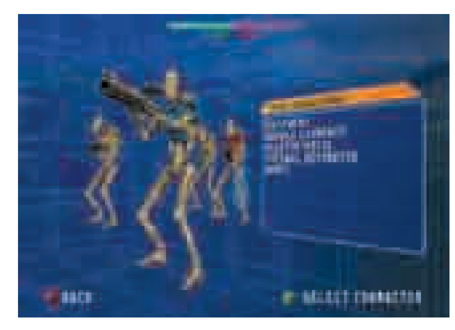
And there's the rub. Unsurprisingly, it's the game's online gameplay (identical to the offline style, bar the addition of your friends rather than AI) that really brings the game alive. Strangely, *Battlefront*'s online mode also serves to highlight the limitations of online console gaming today – the PS2 and Xbox versions only support a maximum of 16 players in any one battle (an optimistic number, given that it doesn't take broadband speeds into account), leaving the game to compensate by supplementing each side's forces with AI bots. As such, battles can occasionally become slightly less fun than they should be – after all, getting killed by a piece of code isn't nearly as enjoyable as it is by a worthy human opponent. It's hardly Pandemic's fault but it's difficult to not to be a little disheartened. But only a little.

The fact is, so much more about *Battlefront* manages to impress rather than disappoint – from the solid gameplay to the overall application of the *Star Wars* universe, which has been done with so much care and attention that even the most hardened fan will be satisfied. And for that, Pandemic must be applauded. If only all *Star Wars* games could be this way, the universe might be a better place.



VERDICT 8/10

FINALLY, ANOTHER GAME WORTHY OF THE LICENCE



REBEL WITH SEVERAL CAUSES

Having five types of soldier to choose from might seem a little excessive, but you'll find yourself switching around more often than you might expect depending on the state of the battle. Can't take a Command Post with your basic infantry because there's an entrenched enemy in a turret? Change to a sniper and take him out from a distance. Finding yourself dominated by opposition vehicles? Bring out the big guns and blow them away with some rockets. Some tasks, such as taking down the Shield Generator on Endor, even require specific characters thanks to the restrictions on weaponry. It's all about strategy; once you've figured it out, you've won half the battle.

SOCOM II: US NAVY SEALS



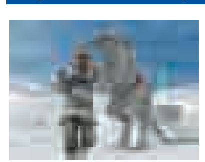
BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS



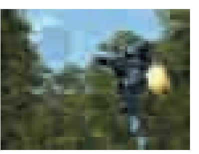
RAINBOW SIX 3: BLACK ARROW

PS2 £34.99 OUT NOW



There's very little difference between the PS2 and Xbox versions of *Battlefront*, aside from some slightly longer loading times and graphics that are a little rougher.

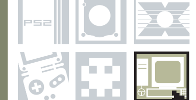
PC £34.99 OUT NOW



Crisper visuals aside, PC players also benefit from improvements on the online multiplayer front, with up to 32 people being to play each other at any one time.



DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Electronic Arts

DEVELOPER
Maxis

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

MINIMUM SPEC
Pentium III 800MHz, 256Mb RAM, Direct X 9b 32Mb graphics card, 3.5Gb HDD space

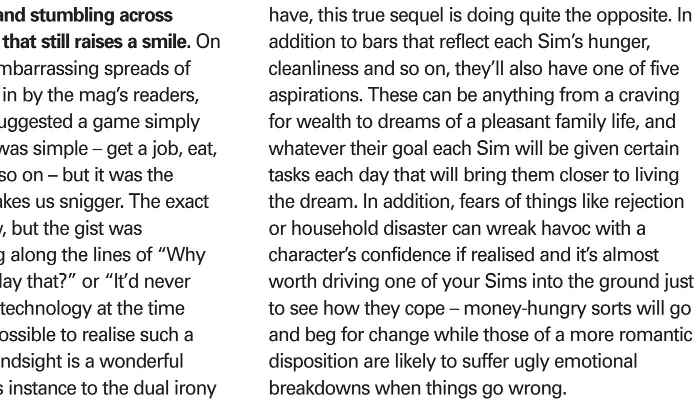




THE SIMS 2

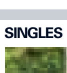
THE LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE RETURN FOR THE REAL GENERATION GAME

Back in the 16-bit era, this reviewer recalls flicking through a Mega Drive magazine and stumbling across something that still raises a smile. On one of those generally embarrassing spreads of games suggestions sent in by the mag's readers, some bright spark had suggested a game simply called *Life*. The concept was simple – get a job, eat, sleep, make friends and so on – but it was the magazine's reply that makes us snigger. The exact wording escapes us now, but the gist was unforgettable, something along the lines of "Why would anyone want to play that?" or "It'd never work as a game". While technology at the time would have made it impossible to realise such a concept, the benefit of hindsight is a wonderful thing, second only in this instance to the dual irony that this 'impossible and pointless' game not only exists today but is the best selling PC game of all time. And now there's a sequel…



While games like *The Urbz* are cutting down on the amount of wants and needs your characters have, this true sequel is doing quite the opposite. In addition to bars that reflect each Sim's hunger, cleanliness and so on, they'll also have one of five aspirations. These can be anything from a craving for wealth to dreams of a pleasant family life, and whatever their goal each Sim will be given certain tasks each day that will bring them closer to living the dream. In addition, fears of things like rejection or household disaster can wreak havoc with a character's confidence if realised and it's almost worth driving one of your Sims into the ground just to see how they cope – money-hungry sorts will go and beg for change while those of a more romantic disposition are likely to suffer ugly emotional breakdowns when things go wrong.

Playing God has arguably never been as free, rewarding or downright enjoyable as it is here.

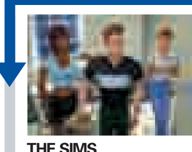


SINGLES



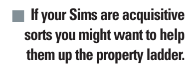
BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS



THE SIMS

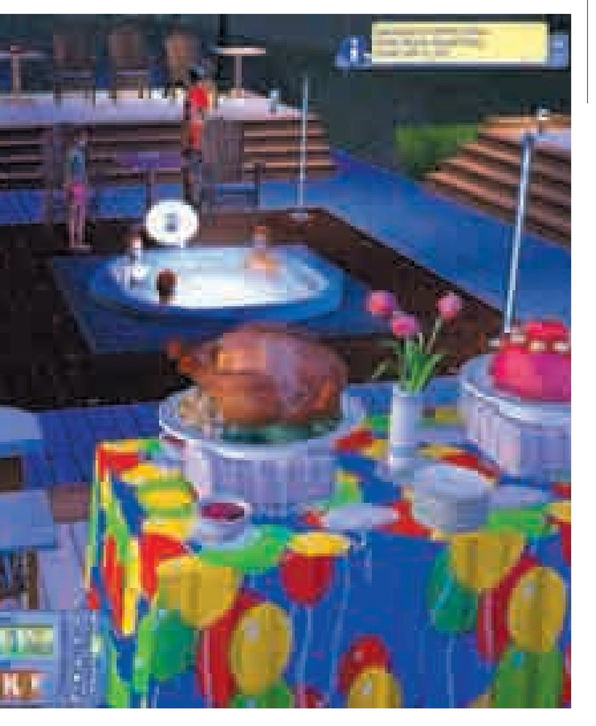
Liven things up in your Sim house by throwing a party. Hot tub and jelly optional…



If your Sims are acquisitive sorts you might want to help them up the property ladder.









games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

THE RITE STUFF: Major events in a Sim's life are celebrated through beautiful cut-scenes.

VIVA FOREVER: Unlike previous games, *The Sims 2* can actually boast infinite replay value.



Force your Sims to dance non-stop? Yeah, hell, why not?



Make that proposal then get busy creating a little Sim baby. Ahh.

Best of all, every type of deity is catered for so you'll find it just as easy to have a good time as a caring overseer who guides a household to prosperity as you will as a hateful monster who likes nothing more than to seal a few Sims in a room without food and make them dance to the theme from *Ulysses 31* for days on end. Deeper still, you're able to look through your Sims' memories – they actually remember every major event in their lives so you can see what shapes them into the person they eventually die as. And while death may seem like the end, remember that you're able to play unlimited generations of the same family. Sim DNA means a child will take on some of their parents' attributes, often becoming more apparent as they grow older. As if that weren't impressive enough, each generation interacts with others differently and has demands tailored for their age, making for almost unlimited potential.

Imagine everything that you wanted from the first *Sims* game and you're pretty much thinking about *The Sims 2*. Rather than watch the same few characters go about the same routines day after day, the variety offered by this fine lesson in sequel development in both the short and long term is almost second to none in gaming. It's not without its troubles – path finding is still occasionally confused and Sims would still much rather complain about a tiny obstacle than simply move it – but when you take into account just how much is going on and how much the game does wonderfully, the few 'incidents' that you might have along the way soon drift into irrelevance.

Quite simply, this is a game so packed with features and so lovingly crafted that, for the first time that we can recall, you'll still be discovering parts of it by the time the add-on packs roll around. They'll be daunting prospects, adding obscene amounts of extras to the wealth of existing stuff you still won't have seen. It'll be interesting to see what direction these take – in addition to the already astounding fundamentals, there's an insane amount of potential waiting to be capitalised upon, provided EA can avoid the expansion-after-expansion dairy process that verged on farcical towards the end of the first game's life. Some of us are lactose intolerant, you know…



VERDICT 9/10

AS ENTERTAINING AND WHOLESOME AS A GAME CAN BE

STORY OF MY LIFE

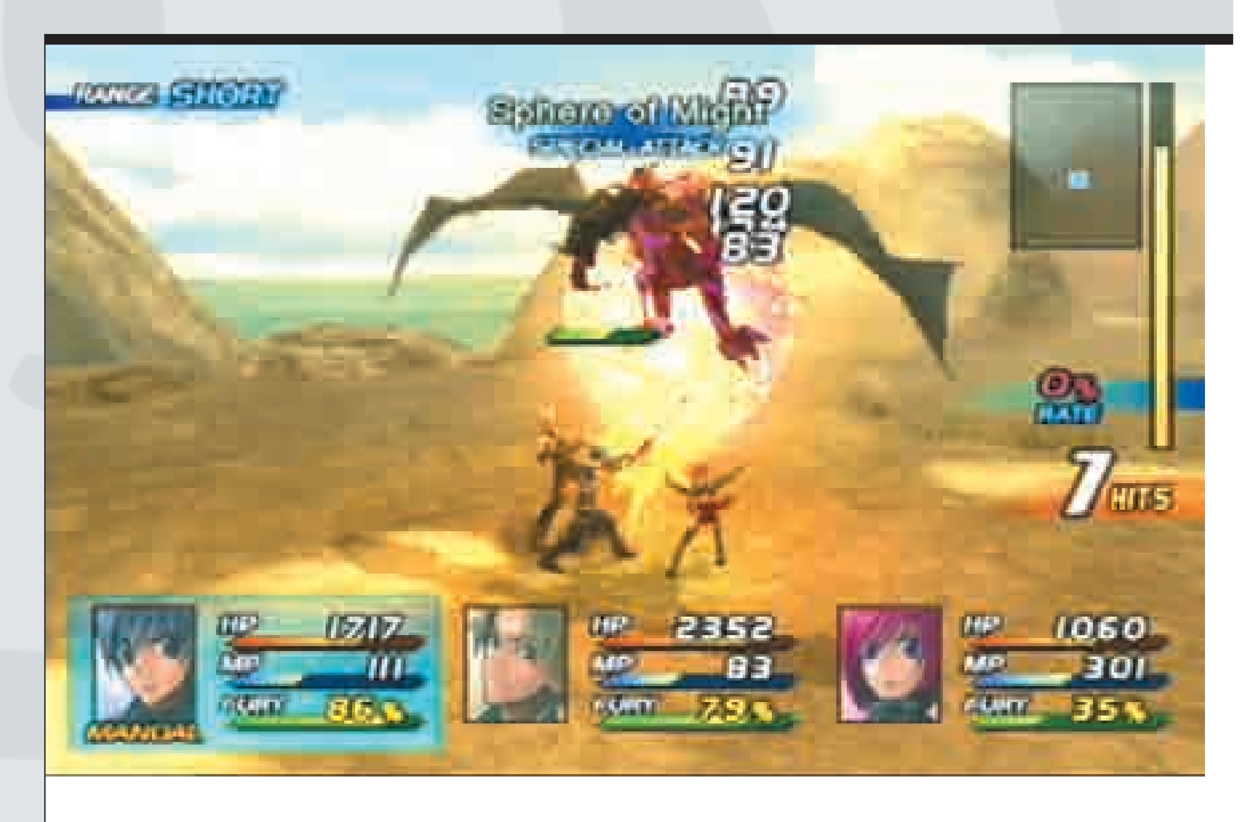
As if it weren't enough playing out the lives of your created family, Maxis has seen fit to allow players to document their fictional non-adventures in several ways and tell their stories to the world. The simplest of these allows you to caption a series of screen captures to make your own comic strips or storyboards and then upload them to the *Sims 2* website, but the other medium is more ingenious still. In essence, a video camera mode allows you to stage events and film them, editing together your own little mini-soap, documentary or sitcom. This can then be uploaded for the world to see, and by placing it in a special directory you'll even be able to have your Sims watch these shows or watch each other's efforts. Alternatively, load in any .avi files for movies and games (or MP3s for the radio stations) and treat your Sims to a taste of the real world.

FAQs

Q. HOW LONG IS IT?
Don't be silly. It'll last as long as your attention span and you'll keep coming back to it.

Q. HOW BIG CAN A FAMILY GET?
Up to eight people can live in a house, with plenty more fun to be had when you throw a party.

Q. HOW'S THE CHARACTER CREATION?
It focuses heavily on facial options – size and stature don't tend to vary that much.

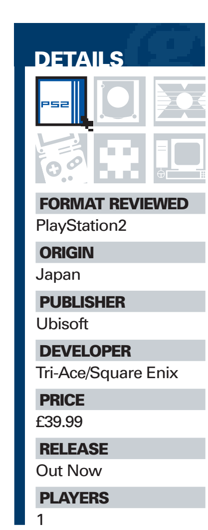



The mini-map makes navigating the huge and plentiful areas a simple task.

Progression is fairly simplistic with just enough freedom to develop your characters your way.

GONNA GET YOU, I'M A SPACE BOY

STAR OCEAN: TILL THE END OF TIME



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
Tri-Ace/Square Enix

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

***Star Ocean* has proved to be a game of surprises.** Few could have imagined a few years back that Tri-Ace's twin-disc adventure would make the jump over the Atlantic, least of all so shortly after the much-delayed US release. Many more surprises come in the game itself, where the ever-twisting plot has thrown some serious curveballs our way. One in particular springs to mind…

After a futuristic opening that establishes *Star Ocean* as having graduated from the same RPG academy as *Xenosaga* or *Front Mission*, Tri-Ace pulls one of the biggest about-faces that we've ever seen and much of the first disc takes place on 'underdeveloped planets'. This means that rather than the lasers, robots and spaceships that you might expect, you'll spend a lot of your time fighting dragons and knights with primitive weapons. This is not so much a complaint as a surprise – the game does tie the two aspects together with themes of morality and the same kind of attitude towards interfering in the affairs of the people that you see whenever someone (in movies or games) travels through time. Indeed, the characters and locations have been given so much history that you'll struggle to avoid finding it at least slightly interesting.

But while the game may take longer than almost any other RPG to get going properly, this works both ways. Sure, it'll ward off the less committed player but once the action and story kick in, the slow build-up makes it seem still more impressive. Few games can offer the kind of return on time investment that *Till The End Of Time* does. Early on, there are some issues with your allies' AI during battle, with them often feeling the need to repeatedly sacrifice precious HP and MP on costly skills. While these problems still exist later in the game, spending 25 HP on a skill is a different matter when you've got 5,000 to spend as opposed to 500, so while these problems are there, they seldom ruin the experience.

As is often the case in an age where random battles have become something of a gaming faux pas, you're able to spot your foes as you explore each area, facing or avoiding them as you see fit. Combat is a proficient real-time affair and – AI issues aside – is an excellent system, varying between regions and offering opportunities for huge

FINAL FANTASY X-2



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



TALES OF SYMPHONIA



THINGS TO MAKE AND DO

Considering *Star Ocean* is so packed with features, narrative and background when compared to many other RPGs, the Invention system is the prod that sends the player tumbling into the deep end. Once you reach the first useable workshop, you'll be able to start applying your characters to tasks outside of battling and chatting for hours on end, challenging them to dream up and create all manner of items. Some of these – augmented potions, equipment and suchlike – will help your cause and make you a household name on the inventing scene, while others serve little actual purpose aside from an entertaining item description. The more you invent, the more alerts you'll get mid-dungeon that your creations have gone on sale, been approved or even if a new rival has joined the field – this aspect really is a game in itself.

games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

PROGRESSION: Dungeons go from fairly big to absolutely huge in the space of a few hours.

DUET: It joins the few RPGs that find themselves spread across multiple DVDs. It's massive.



Interaction between characters is an absolute joy to behold.

combos and cunning tactics for more experienced players. With all the pyrotechnics that accompany the more potent abilities it can get quite confusing on the battlefield, but despite this occasional frustration (plus that of knocked-down foes becoming temporarily invincible), the narrative is strong enough to drag you towards its conclusion.

Star Ocean is as visually resplendent as it is epic. Visuals are crisp, stylish and well-animated; a trio that covers up some lacklustre modelling wonderfully and keeps the superbly directed cut-scenes from getting dull. The highlight is undoubtedly Motoi Sakuraba's wonderful score, ranging from memorable, up-tempo battle tunes to serene orchestral numbers with just about everything you could ask for in between. Far from letting the sonic side down, voice acting is also of a decent-to-high standard and the mix of spoken lines and text isn't as jarring as it often can be.

But it's the fundamentals that keep us coming back to *Star Ocean* night after increasingly late night. Rewards for continuing to battle enemies mean that levelling up isn't such a chore as it often is; fighting foes genuinely feels far more involving than in most RPGs, and while not exactly brimming with freedom, character development gives you just enough opportunity to tailor each of the individuals to your style of play.

The game certainly won't appeal to everyone, nor is it one you can put down for a while and come back to – this is a huge commitment but one that is very worthwhile despite a few crucial flaws. You've probably seen publications telling you that *Star Ocean* will last you 'Till The End Of Time'. This is contrived nonsense, but even with a conservative estimate, this adventure will keep you occupied for a very long time.

VERDICT 7/10

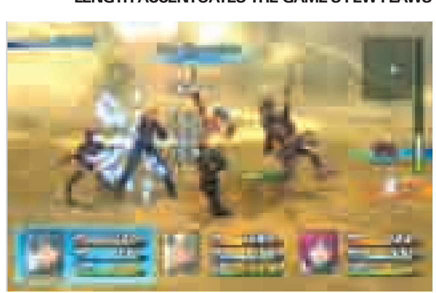
LENGTH ACCENTUATES THE GAME'S FEW FLAWS

FAQs

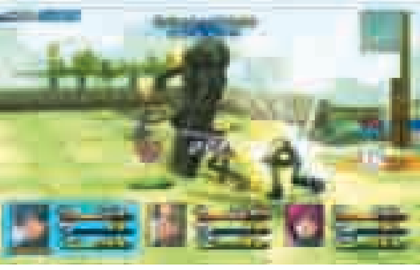
Q. HOW LONG IS IT?
Star Ocean is one of the lengthiest RPGs of this generation; easily 50+ hours over two discs.

Q. GOOD BATTLES?
Oh yes – real-time action makes for some great combo opportunities and strategising.

Q. REWARDS?
The Battle Trophy system is as unique and encouraging as anything similar but you'll need several plays to get the lot.



Timing is key in piecing together the biggest combos. There's a great online video of someone approaching 5,000 hits…



There are so many hidden features and areas that even with the guide you'll struggle to see them all.



FORMAT
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
Xbox, PC

ORIGIN
France

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
Hydravision

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
October '04

PLAYERS
1-2

OBSCURE

HERE COMES THE GAIN

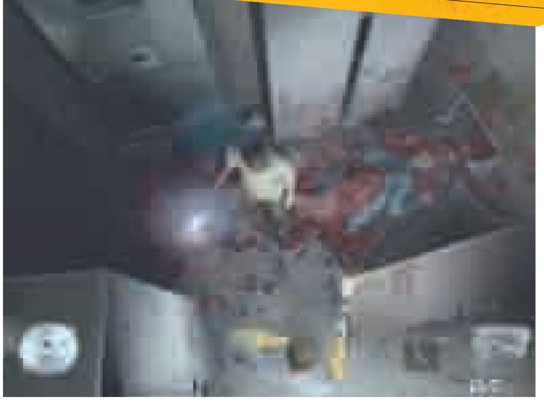


FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

TWO BECOME ONE: Plug in an additional pad and your team-mate can be controlled by a second player – an option that puts *Resident Evil: Outbreak*'s single-player-only PAL release to shame.





While the horror is largely absent, *Obscure* does revel in its occasional gory moments.

A long crane shot of students with bags slung over their shoulders walking to college, while Sum 41's pop-punk blares in the background. *Obscure*'s opening could belong to any number of teen-horror movies that clog up cinemas, but it's the first time a videogame has tried its hand at such fare. And just as these films focus on cliques and clichéd personalities, so *Obscure* relies on teamwork and unique character abilities. However, it's nice to see the specialities have genuine use and aren't just there to differentiate between avatars; for instance, Shannon will tell you where to go and offer advice while Josh, the token nerd, will 'sense' if there's an item that you haven't picked up yet. Combine these skills and already the genre's excess flab of tedious backtracking is cut. Sadly, you can only travel in pairs, which means any characters besides your favourite duo will spend the duration kicking their heels.

Teamwork relies on your fellow characters showing intelligence and, unlike the pondlife AI of *Resident Evil: Outbreak*, *Obscure* makes you feel success is easier with company. Some of the best moments come from your companions, as they fend off monsters while you solve puzzles or pick locks. It's testimony to the teamwork system that you have no qualms about handing over a prized shotgun or revolver to your buddy, knowing they'll cover you when needed. Protecting each other is vital, and using the torch strapped to your gun is also important as the monsters are averse to light. While heavy use of torches is hardly avant-garde, it keeps the combat fresh.

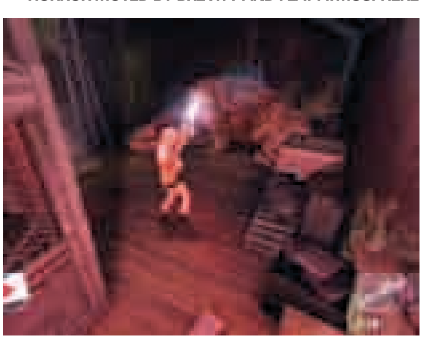
Sadly, two faults undermine *Obscure*'s strides forward. First, it's too short; it only takes four hours to complete and the unlockable special mode won't keep many occupied once the credits fade out. Worse still, it's just not scary enough. The scarce ammunition, stingy health and ominous sound effects are classic survival horror hallmarks, yet the cumulative effect isn't enough to ignite the atmosphere. Even when reduced to the last character in the team and robbed of protective camaraderie, *Obscure* just becomes tougher instead of scarier. Imitating teen-horror movies is a novel idea, but duplicating their running time and feeble horror leaves the game wanting.

VERDICT 5/10

HORROR MUTED BY BREVITY AND FLAT ATMOSPHERE

Vandalising the college actually helps you, allowing you to break into certain rooms.



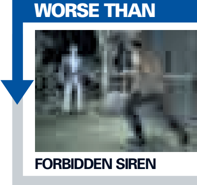


RESIDENT EVIL: OUTBREAK



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



FORBIDDEN SIREN

XBOX £39.99



There are all the standard improvements you'd expect from the Xbox version such as crisper textures and nicer lighting. It's worth nothing that neither of these tweaks, even for a game so reliant on darkness and light, makes *Obscure* any scarier. Shame.



As impressive as the bosses look, it usually takes no more than a bit of patience to beat them.



Battlefields that stretch into the distance and lava-drenched caverns help make the game a visual treat.

PLENTY OF DUNGEONS THAT TEND TO DRAG-ON

FORGOTTEN REALMS: DEMON STONE

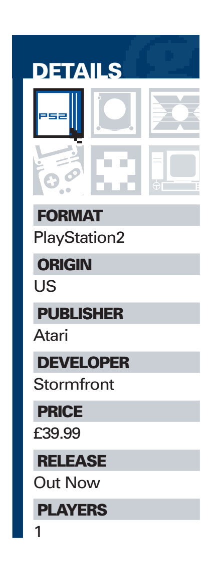
games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

CHOOSE WISELY: Switch between any of the three playable characters at any time during play.

READ MY LIPS: Patrick Stewart and Michael Clarke Duncan lend their voices to key characters.

DETAILS



FORMAT
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Atari

DEVELOPER
Stormfront

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

Slaying fire-breathing dragons, battling fierce Orcs and using awesome magical powers is something many gamers just can't get enough of. For this reason, *Demon Stone* has appeared in an attempt to provide your monthly fantasy fix. Set in the ever-popular Dungeons & Dragons world created by Wizards Of The Coast, *Demon Stone* sees you control three obvious D&D characters – Warrior, Rogue and Sorcerer. It's the player's duty to switch between these characters as they see fit, use their specific abilities correctly and lead the party through ten missions, each more perilous and beastie-filled than the last.

In many ways this is exactly what we'd have expected from Stormfront Studios, creator of *Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers* – it's visually pleasing hack-and-slash action, but, unfortunately, there are also a few annoyances that we didn't expect. The title's main downfall is the fact that every now and then – presumably to break up the continuous slaughter of Trolls and Orcs – an event will occur that forces you to take advantage of your full team and use each of their attributes in order to tackle an obstacle or boss. A good idea in theory, as they provide one of the few reasons for switching your character away from the hard-hitting Warrior, but these sections have been made far too laborious and take what seems like an age to complete, even once you know exactly what you're supposed to be doing and the best way to go about it.



You were never going to get through a D&D game without a spot of dragon slaying.

To make matters worse, whether you complete a task or die at the hands of a Goblin halfway through (and are forced to perform the whole arduous routine over again) will often depend solely on whether a particular slain enemy conveniently drops a health pick-up in front of you. Not an endearing feature. These flaws aside, *Demon Stone* does its job. Superb looking levels drag you in to the D&D world, there's more than enough slicing and dicing to keep the most bloodthirsty adventurer satisfied, and a suitably epic soundtrack adds to the experience – it's just a shame you'll need little more than patience to see the credits roll.



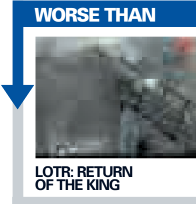
VERDICT 5/10
A LITTLE TOO MUCH LIKE HARD WORK

HUNTER: THE RECKONING



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



LOTR: RETURN OF THE KING



With pop already beginning to eat itself, the end is also nigh for other musical genres. 'R&B' now seems to cover anything down to a drumbeat and some whingeing; overcrowding under the rock umbrella is forcing bands to make themselves sound original with nonsensical sub-genres (extremo being a house favourite); while dance music remains stable, having always been 99 per cent Casio demo drivel anyway. One genre, though, appears to be feeling the strain far worse than the rest, causing its artists to inflict severe pain upon one another in ways no regular mind could ever dream up. In the last week, we've seen hip hop stars throwing each other through windows and walls, slamming heads in car doors, setting each other alight and chucking people under subway trains. But best of all, we're the ones who have been playing Big Brother, deciding who comes away with the bling and who gets dropped – a literal 50-foot plummet in this case – by their label

DEF JAM: FIGHT FOR NEW YORK

VIOLENCE BEGETS VIOLENCE AS SNOOP TAKES OVER THE BIG APPLE

Touch the sides in an Inferno Match and its stop, drop and roll time for you.

games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

GO LARGE: Everything in *Fight For New York* is bigger, louder and better than in *Vendetta*.

BRUTAL: Hear bones snap, ligaments tear and skulls crack in glorious 5.1. Ban this sick filth…



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PlayStation2, GameCube

ORIGIN
Canada/Japan

PUBLISHER
Electronic Arts

DEVELOPER
EA Canada/AKI Corp

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-4

"You big talk now but you gon' cry like a baby when me crush you." Shut up and die, you illiterate fool.

This sequel to 2003's *Def Jam: Vendetta* should, like its predecessor, be horrible on principle. If you were to hear nothing more than the concept, chances are you'd write it off as a vessel for a few egotistical rappers to brag and beat their chests, but in reality this pans out pretty well for your average gamer. You see, chances are that every player will find they have 'issues' with one of the 70-strong cast (Sean Paul seems a popular choice around these parts) and you'd be amazed how much time you can while away just trying to discover new ways of hurting your chosen victim. Even the idea of blinging your character up for each fight should be one that fills us with dread but the whole Charisma system – whereby crowd members respond differently to you depending on how much they respect you – makes your every shimmering upgrade worthwhile. And that's before you even get into the proper carnage…

Perhaps most surprising is not how well the game plays – we already knew to expect AKI's experience to shine through here and it does just that, offering as solid and rewarding a grappler as you're likely to play – but just how graphic *Def Jam* is. For a game where the aim is to knock your opponent out (and what a knockout being thrown under a subway train must be), there's a hell of a lot of claret spilling and bone crunching going on in the venues of New York. This is strangely more wince-inducing than many games that proclaim to

STYLE OVER SUBSTANCE

When creating a character, you'll have to pick from one of five fighting disciplines – wrestling, street fighting, martial arts, submissions or kickboxing. At first, your fighter will show limited proficiency and a pathetic attack repertoire but as he starts to make a name for himself his skills will grow. Eventually, you'll be able to combine up to two more ways of dishing out pain with your original choice to form your own hybrid style, one that can be as distinctive as you like and whose techniques and attacks vary dramatically. Best of all, every discipline feels markedly different with each offering at least one way to deliver a unique KO. In addition to finishing with a special move, street fighters, for example, can knock opponents for six with a haymaker punch, martial artists use flying kicks and wrestlers employ the biggest moves of the WWE.



be more inherently violent, exemplified by some absolutely horrific Blazin' moves which see the recipient reel away nursing a shattered limb or ruined skeleton. Indeed, some of the ready moves are just as cringe-worthy, especially those that enlist the help of environmental hazards like neon lights and barbed wire-coated walls or the brutal weapon attacks. These let you pummel rivals with anything from bricks to bottles to baseball bats in addition to your already menacing selection of strikes and grapples, and unlike the bloody gimmickry of *Mortal Kombat*, there are very few of the more punishing moves that you'll quickly tire of seeing.

Part of this allure can be attributed to just how impressively the visuals serve their purpose. Wonderfully rendered characters resemble their real-life counterparts disturbingly realistically, and while picking someone up by their legs and slamming them head first into the ground is quite shocking, having the game freeze and zoom in on your victim's terrified face gives your every act of violence that much more impact. Presentation can't be faulted either, calling in a decent catalogue of hip hop tunes and a grimy front end that is both functional and well-suited to the game's style.

If it weren't for the fact that you can easily clock Story mode and unlock everything in a weekend, we'd have a much easier job recommending *Fight For New York*. Sure, you'll go back to quite a few of the matches often enough if only to dish out blood-splattered retribution for what much of the cast has subjected your ears to, and multiplayer is definitely an enjoyable aspect of the game if you can find worthy opponents. With EA now firmly making its mark on online gaming, we can but hope that a deserved sequel makes it out with network play options allowing us to kick in all number of distant Sean Pauls and Fat Joes. Even without such functionality, a more solid, playable and visually splendid grappler than this will be hard to come by, even if it does last about as long as Snow's career. Informer indeed…



VERDICT 7/10
POLISHED AND SATISFYING IF A TOUCH SHORT-LIVED



MTV argued that Xzibit's method of pimping Warren G's ride was taking the idea 'too far'.



Ladies and gentlemen, we give you one of the most satisfying moments in gaming history.

FAQs

Q. HOW MANY FIGHTERS?
Once you unlock the lot, you'll have 74 characters to choose from with a good balance of celebrities and fictional brawlers.

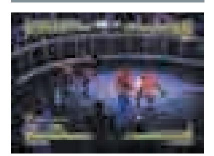
Q. STORY MODE?
Guide your created fighter through a series of increasingly tough battles and a decent narrative for ten or so hours.

Q. WHAT MODES ARE THERE?
Story mode unlocks new event types like Window, Subway, Demolition and Inferno matches. Feel the burn…



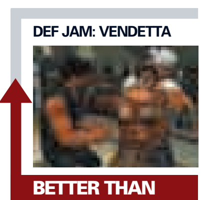
Many of the superhuman Blazin' moves are guaranteed to put a smile on your face. Albeit a twisted one…

PS2/GC OUT NOW



Aside from a marginal drop in visual quality, there's little to call between the three versions of *Fight For New York*. For control freaks, the PS2 version might just have the edge, though.

DEF JAM: VENDETTA



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

POWER STONE 2

SEGA PUTS THE FUN BACK INTO ARCADE RACING

OUTRUN 2

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Sega

DEVELOPER
Sumo Digital

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
October '04

PLAYERS
1-4

You're tearing down a seemingly endless stretch of asphalt, 'Magical Sound Shower' blasts from your F-40's stereo and you've just pulled off the almightiest of powerslides. Tyres squealing and still sliding at a ridiculous angle, you majestically weave through dense traffic, while your girlfriend triumphantly punches the air beside you. Sound good? It should do – it's *OutRun 2*.

A sequel 17 years in the making, Sega's follow-up is a fantastic way of wasting a couple of quid (providing you can find an arcade that owns it) and is an extremely competent skill-based racer that feels deliciously old-school. Despite our initial reservations about a bare bones arcade conversion getting a console release, Sega's announcement that Sumo Digital would be adding plenty of new features (as well as an online mode with a full complement of traffic) got us all excited again. But you can't help but feel a little sad for *OutRun 2*, what with Criterion's *Burnout 3* coming along at exactly the same time and essentially rewriting the rulebook on arcade racers – it's set the bar so high, it can hardly been seen, let alone reached.

Fortunately, while both games look like they're cut from the same pattern, they're completely different beasts and need to be treated accordingly. Like so many of Sega's racing titles, *OutRun 2* is all about the driving experience and in this it excels like no other current arcade racer. Although the main Arcade mode – which sadly doesn't feature the recent SP tracks – can be completed in less than a day, mastering each track and perfecting the all-important powerslide is another matter entirely. And let's face it, when you have a game that looks as good as *OutRun 2* does, you're going to have no problems revisiting its exotic and beautifully realised locations in order to perfect your art.

Sumo (admittedly with help from AM2) has created a stunning conversion that perfectly captures the spirit of its arcade parent; from the fog-blanketed beauty of Cloudy Highland to the stunningly bright opening of Palm Beach, *OutRun 2* on the Xbox looks absolutely wonderful and is perfectly complemented by great new tunes and some old favourites. The fact you can't use your own ripped songs is a major letdown, but with a total of 18 tracks Sega has at least ensured that there's plenty to listen to while you're mastering



■ The over-the-top prangs of *Burnout 3* are out of the question, but the arcade racing is faultless.

OUTRUN (PS2)



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS

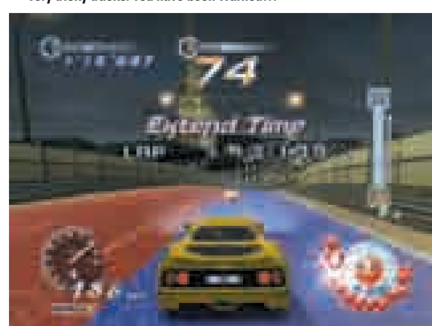


SEGA RALLY





■ If you turn right at every junction, you'll find yourself racing on some very tricky tracks. You have been warned…





games™

ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

HAZARD!: Not only can you race against other Ferraris, you have to deal with oncoming traffic too.

ANOTHER WAY: There's no news on downloads yet, but the SP track has to be a certainty…

OLDER DOESN'T MEAN BETTER

Unsurprisingly, tucked away among the game's many extra features is a conversion of the original *OutRun*. Sadly, it's an absolutely horrific port, featuring shockingly jerky visuals and some extremely suspect handling. Quite why Sumo Digital couldn't have just included the excellent Saturn conversion is a mystery, as even the MAME version is better than this. We hate to break the news like this, but we can't understand how a developer can deliver what looks like a perfect port of a brand new arcade game, yet can't deliver a competent version of a title that's now 18 years old.

the game's sublime courses. And once you've finally found that perfect racing line and sussed out the art of powering around tight hairpins, serious racing nuts will find the majority of their time spent setting new scores in Time Attack mode, or testing their skills in the incredibly deep Heart Attack mode.

Not surprisingly, purists would argue that even a standard conversion of *OutRun 2* is 40 pounds well spent, even though many gamers will hate the lack of a rear view mirror and the incredibly tough in-car view. While we can see the appeal in constantly returning to the same stretch of glorious looking track in order to beat your best personal time, we don't doubt that Joe Public wants a little more for his hard-earned cash. Thankfully, Sumo Digital has done the game proud. Not content with delivering a title that looks virtually indistinguishable from the gobsmacking beauty of the arcade game, it has also managed to cram a huge amount of missions (101 in fact) into *OutRun 2*'s beautiful innards.

Using a similar branching system to the arcade map, the challenge section feels not unlike like the Crazy Box mode from *Crazy Taxi*. Knowing that 12 events (no matter how enjoyable *Crazy Taxi*'s were) simply isn't enough for today's gamer, Sumo has delivered 18 mini-games that will constantly pull you back with their 'just one more go' factor. From lining up the perfect camera shot while sliding around tight hairpins or simply tearing along vast stretches of track while trying to maintain a predetermined speed, you'll be simply amazed at how much variety Sumo has managed to inject into the game. Stealing Hearts from other cars, rapidly weaving down narrow roads that are heavily populated with enormous trucks, working out simple maths equations and recalling the exact appearance of various fruits are just a few of the bizarre events on offer, but somehow it all works. Sumo has realised that for all their



We won't actually tell you what the bonus tracks are, but this screenshot should give you a good indication…

outstanding visuals and exhilarating gameplay (which *OutRun 2* has in spades), games also need to be fun, and we defy you not to have a huge grin on your face as you take your third corner in a row, or nail that perfect racing line.

Yes, so *OutRun 2* may not feature massive pile-ups or deliver phat urban tunes like its peers, but if all you want to do is rediscover the simple joy of racing, you couldn't want for a better game.

VERDICT 8/10

DEFIANTLY OLD-SCHOOL, BUT BETTER BECAUSE OF IT

FAQs

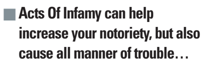
Q. UNLOCKABLES?
Plenty – how do eight cars, 11 tunes, three new characters and two bonus stages sound?

Q. ANYTHING ELSE?
Every time you complete an event in Mission mode you're rewarded with a Top Trumps-style playing card… which is nice to look at.

Q. BONUS TRACKS?
We're saying nothing, although they poach heavily from AM2's back catalogue of racing titles.







Acts Of Infamy can help increase your notoriety, but also cause all manner of trouble…



It's all about making the most of the space provided – that way, you can have an efficient operation.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Vivendi Universal

DEVELOPER
Elixir Studios

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

MINIMUM SPEC
Pentium III 800MHz, 128Mb RAM, Direct X9 16Mb graphics card, 300Mb HDD space

EVIL GENIUS

EVERYBODY WANTS TO RULE THE WORLD

Being bad in a videogame is hardly a new concept – we remember the likes of *Elite* introducing us to the art of looting and pillaging some 20 years ago. Still, the thought of being stereotypically evil as opposed to just killing, stealing and generally being nasty is one that appeals greatly. After all, mindlessly performing evil deeds in a videogame these days (be it *GTA*, *KOTOR*, *Fable* or any other morally challenging offering) doesn't take much effort… but doing it while twiddling a well-oiled moustache, flourishing a cape and laughing maniacally all at the same time?

As everyone from Dr No to George W Bush has proved, taking over the world is never easy and it's that point that Elixir's *Evil Genius* takes to an almost gleefully sadistic extreme by piling on the pressure from the beginning. That's not to say that getting started is complicated. In fact, the ease with which you can turn your 'island of indiscriminate location' into some semblance of an evil lair is almost enough to convince you that global domination is a piece of cake. Creating rooms and corridors is a simple matter of picking out what you want from a list, drawing blueprints, then sitting back and watching your drones do all the work. Certain events cause more rooms to become available: the death of a minion unlocks the Infirmary, using too much electricity opens up the Power Plant and so on, meaning you'll always have the things you need to keep your base ticking over.

Creating the framework of a base may sound simple, but there are other aspects that you need to take into account. The amount of minions

COMMAND AND CONQUER

Only being able to directly control selected characters in the game – specifically your evil genius and any henchmen under your command – might sound troublesome but, for the most part, the indirect method of ordering about minions works. Nevertheless, there are occasional problems. That minions don't always look after themselves (even if you've provided adequate facilities for them to do so) can prove annoying, as can watching workers run around in a blind panic or refuse to follow orders without being able to do a thing about it. The option may be there to kill the troublemaker and hire a replacement, but it doesn't make the occurrence any less irksome in a tight situation.



Too many attackers? Put your base on Red Alert and watch bedlam break out as your men kill anything that moves.

you're allowed is proportionate to how many accessible lockers there are in your Barracks; how many dead bodies you can store in your Freezer depends on the number of meat racks you own; holding multiple people hostage while maintaining a security network and keeping your men armed means having gun racks, holding cells and a security desk all present in your Armoury… the list goes on. It's here that the importance of forward planning becomes clear, and believe us, *Evil Genius* is all about the forward planning.

You can't build a room without considering its dimensions depending on what you want inside, but that has to be offset against how much it's going to cost; wasted space is, after all, wasted money. As such, *Evil Genius*'s careful balancing act of maximising every inch of your hollowed-out mountain, buying as much as you can without being wasteful and making sure your minions don't literally work themselves to death is what makes the game so compelling – getting it right is far from easy but when you do, the rewards are plentiful. And that's only the half of it.

Running a world-conquering base of mass destruction might take up most of your time, but there's also the small matter of maintaining your funds, recruiting new henchmen and increasing your global influence. Thankfully, all this is confined to a single world map that allows you to move your forces around the globe, observe their actions and undertake missions (or Acts Of Infamy) that will increase your villainy status. Again, though, such actions come with a price; the more you harass a region, the more it will retaliate by sending troops to investigate, infiltrate or even attack your base.

Success only comes through watchful consideration and constant control of your men rather than just storming in, and this makes each victory all the sweeter. Granted, it may be the thick vein of very British humour running throughout the game that takes some credit for holding frustration at bay. However, Elixir has learnt much from the overly-ambitious *Republic* and, as such, everything about this title feels far more rounded and polished, irrespective of the clichéd veneer. As a game of both scope and amusement, *Evil Genius* finds itself conqueror of its own world – enough to satisfy the bald, monocle-wearing, cat-stroking midget in us all.

FAQs

Q. CLICHÉD?
Of course it is, but then that's the point. *Evil Genius* is packed with every *Bond* cliché on purpose – if it wasn't, it wouldn't have half the atmosphere it does.

Q. DIFFICULT?
Definitely. It takes patience and thought to succeed here, unless you fancy running out of cash and being overrun by enemy agents in the first hour of play.

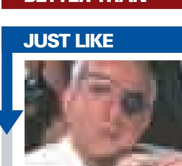
Q. GAME OVER?
The only way to truly lose the game is to let your evil genius die – other than that, there's always a way to claw your way back onto the villainy ladder.

DUNGEON KEEPER

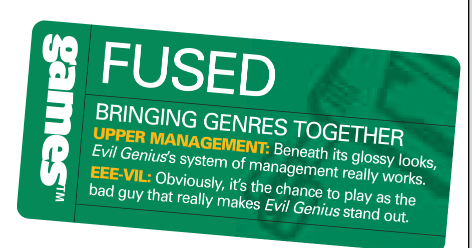


BETTER THAN

JUST LIKE



BEING A BOND VILLAIN



games™

FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

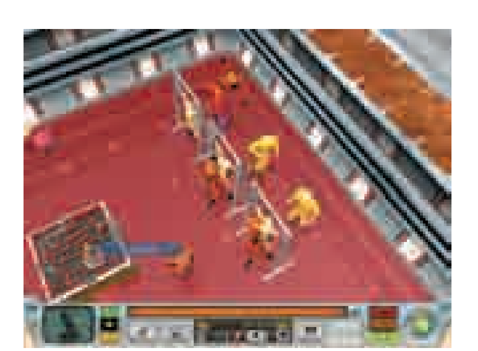
UPPER MANAGEMENT: Beneath its glossy looks, *Evil Genius*'s system of management really works.

EEE-VIL: Obviously, it's the chance to play as the bad guy that really makes *Evil Genius* stand out.



VERDICT 7/10

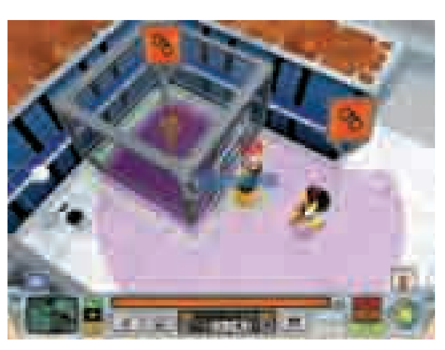
SERIOUSLY HARD, BUT AMUSINGLY FULFILLING



Training your basic grunts allows you to acquire specialist troops, each of which play a vital role in keeping your base running.



It won't be long before you can set up your own security network to alert your men to the presence of enemy infiltrators.



Pointing and laughing at other people's misfortunes – it's what an evil genius does best. Just don't be doing it all day…



Is there intelligent life on other planets? Well, duh, there's Pikmin…





As great and multi-talented as Pikmin are, they're pretty useless without your guidance.

THE PIKMIN ARE FINALLY IN FULL BLOOM

PIKMIN 2

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
GameCube

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Nintendo

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
8 October

PLAYERS
1-2

Existence is tough. There are always jobs to be done, obstacles in your way and deadlines to be met. Most people tend to be in a constant state of stress and fatigue. If there's one thing we feel would make everyone's lives that little bit easier, it would be to have a bunch of colourful little plant people taking great pleasure in carrying stuff, destroying walls and fighting your battles for you should you demand it. No more trips to the bar on a Friday night, unfinished paperwork could be dragged inside an onion and forgotten about… hell, they could just carry you around all day. Have we stumbled upon the solution to life's problems?

Ever since *Pikmin* launched with the GameCube in 2002, thoughts like this have rattled through our brains. An addictive, innovative title that reeked of the 'Nintendo difference' we've heard so much about, *Pikmin* was a joy to play and now its sequel has finally arrived. At a glance, the differences between *Pikmin 2* and the first game aren't at all obvious. In fact, you'd be forgiven for thinking this was the same game with a slightly polished graphical style. That said, an overhaul was something we were neither expecting nor hoping for. This time around, there have been no accidents. With a little help from the Pikmin, Captain Olimar has returned home to find the

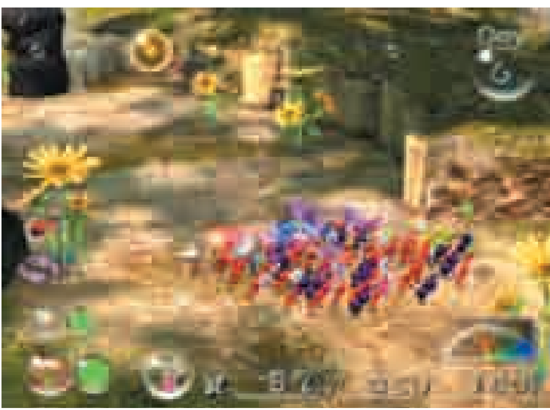
PIKMIN

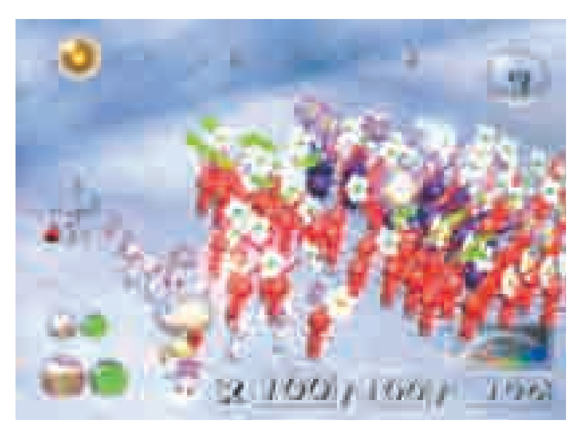


BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

ACTUALLY OWNING PIKMIN





GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT

At the end of nearly every one of the gloomy cave areas you'll encounter one of the game's nasty bosses who'll be gagging to chow down on your crunchy (well, they look pretty crunchy) Pikmin friends. You'll usually have to make at least two attempts at these enemies, as their attacks will often remain a complete mystery until it's far too late. Expect to yelp with pity as 50 or so of your sweet little Pikmin get flattened by a giant larvae that decides to roll in your general direction as soon as it gets its first leaf-slap, or when some heron-serpent hybrid leaps from the sand and scoops up a beakful of your tiny helpers. It's so upsetting we nearly cried. Fortunately, the caves have handily been designed with auto-save points between each level, so returning to a boss after a horrific Pikmin slaughter isn't that difficult.



Only in vast numbers can your Pikmin take on the larger enemies. Unfortunately, you're bound to lose a few of the little fellas.

Locate a cave entrance and your brave Pikmin will leap down to find some goodies for you.



FAQs

Q. IS IT TOUGH ENOUGH?
The lack of a time limit makes it easier to complete everything than it was in the first game.

Q. IS MULTIPLAYER MODE FUN?
Yes. As long as you like beating your mates by growing and commanding little plant men.

Q. DO THEY STILL SING?
Yup. Their happy little ditty will be haunting your thoughts for days.



They're not just staring at you – they're also singing a pretty little song.

delivery company that he works for in severe financial difficulty. While he was away having his first Pikmin adventure, the boss took out a huge loan that he's now struggling to repay and it's up to Olimar and his new sidekick, Louie, to head back into space and gather surprisingly valuable everyday items to sell in order to save the business.

As you'd imagine, with Louie around things play out a little differently. The ability to switch between characters whenever you wish and tackle tasks from multiple angles lets *Pikmin 2* improve on the puzzle elements of the first game, and the later levels really take advantage of this – the new cave/dungeon-type areas that play such a large role are a nightmare when they start having in excess of 25 item-filled floors to explore. But the most substantial difference between the two games is the inclusion of two new Pikmin types. In addition to the regular red, yellow and blue critters from the first game, you'll be introduced to the purple and white varieties that have their own unique skills to further your collecting abilities. The purple Pikmin are the behemoths of the show – they're as heavy and hard-hitting as ten normal Pikmin. Obviously, this makes them perfect for squashing paper bags that block your route and fighting all manner of enemies, but they pay for their strength in speed and trundle along at a pathetic pace. Our favourites by far are the white Pikmin. Tiny, fast and gifted with giant red eyes, these creatures can see items buried in the ground and emit a poisonous gas when eaten that can help slay even the toughest heron or cuttlefish should you be hard-hearted enough to sacrifice them for the greater good.

When it comes down to it, there's not much more you could ask from a sequel. Almost everything that you might have thought the first game was lacking has been provided. Our one minor complaint we have is that it's maybe not as much of a challenge as the first game was and it's not going to take long to see everything the game has to offer – but then even this will depend greatly on how much enjoyment you can take from the brilliant multiplayer modes, where you can either team up with a friend and take on one of the dungeons in an effort to finish with a full set of Pikmin or take them on head-to-head and use your army of flowery friends to steal their marbles before they relieve you of yours.

We're sure that purists will swear blind that this title is inferior to its predecessor, and we'll be the first to admit that it's lost a little of the charm that made *Pikmin* so memorable. But originality at this level only really works well once, and *Pikmin 2* is a superb way to continue the series.

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IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

WE GOT THE MOVES: New Pikmin with new abilities make this more varied than the last game.

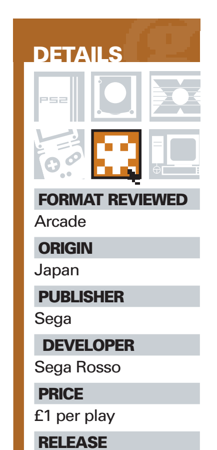
WATCH THE CLOCK: The absence of a time limit means exploring is much more viable.

VERDICT 8/10

TAKES A GREAT GAME AND MAKES IT BETTER

LEGENDS CONTINUE TO BE MADE IN SEGA'S TENACIOUS D

INITIAL D: VERSION 3



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED Arcade

ORIGIN Japan

PUBLISHER Sega

DEVELOPER Sega Rosso

PRICE £1 per play

RELEASE Out Now

PLAYERS 1-2

It might not have the heritage of *OutRun 2* or the over-the-top presentation of the *Daytona* series, but *Initial D* is one of those solid arcade racers that keeps you coming back for more. Balancing the manga-based storyline with a more realistic take on driving than most other arcade racers, the series has proven incredibly popular with many arcade gamers – something that Sega has used to its advantage by gauging the reactions of the fans to help evolve the game.

Of course, anyone with experience of Sega Rosso's Japanese street racing title will know that *Initial D* is a cruel mistress, with tight courses and challenging opposition that can test the most accomplished arcade drivers; *Version 3* is no different. This is mainly because most of the game is relatively unchanged, despite some subtle tweaks being made to the AI and handling that only the truly dedicated will notice. Still, that this is simply an arcade improvement means fans won't sit in the cabinet expecting anything more – a fact that makes the game's additions all the sweeter.

Of these supplements, the three tricky new courses – a snow-covered version of the Akina track plus two Hard category circuits, Shomaru and Tsuchisaka – stand out the most, with the last two proving especially tough. Four new cars (the RX-8, Nissan Skyline 25GT Turbo and two new models of the Lancer Evolution) bring the number available to 34, although long-time players won't have to start from scratch thanks to the option to import save data from older versions. And believe us, they'll want to with the inclusion of the new Bunta Challenge mode – in return for points earned by winning races, players can challenge Bunta Fujiwara, the game's fastest racer. The higher your level, the faster he goes; each time you beat him, he gets faster still. It's a quick way to earn points, but the most challenging. Another reason to keep pumping those credits in…

As an evolution of the series, *Initial D: Version 3* bests its predecessors – it's a finely tuned racer with plenty of playability and depth behind its understated veneer. If that's not a bargain for a pound, we don't know what is.



Slip up even once and it can cost you – the opposition drive a mean race and take advantage of every mistake.

games™ CONNECTED

EXPANDING THE GAMEPLAY

WHAT A CARRY ON: You can transfer data from previous *Initial D* games for the cost of a credit.

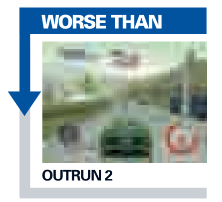
TRIAL AND ERROR: Playing Time Trial gives you a password to use online to find your world ranking.

INITIAL D: ARCADE STAGE



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



OUTRUN 2

VERDICT 7/10

THE PINNACLE OF THE SERIES SO FAR

The new snowy conditions found on the original Akina course can make for some treacherous driving.

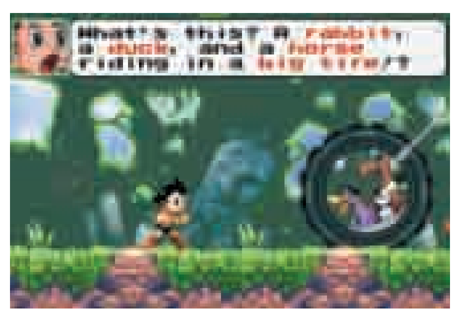


The cartoon-style cut-scenes, modelled on the original manga, appear before each race and help to set the scene.

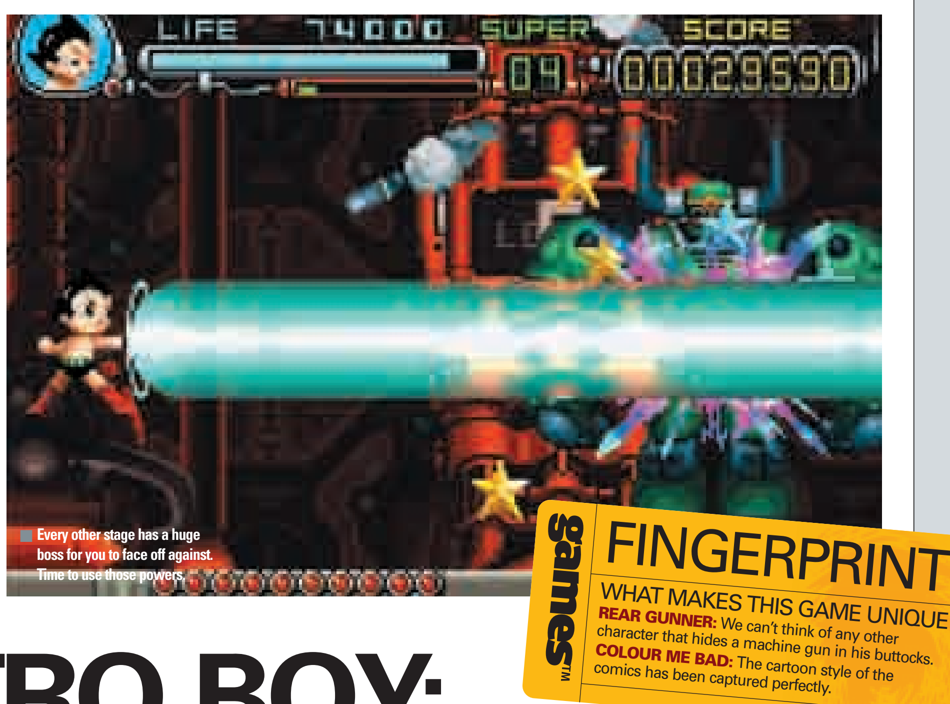




These flying sections turn up every now and then and test your skills to the max.



There aren't many games that boast a collection of creatures in a big tyre.



Every other stage has a huge boss for you to face off against. Time to use those powers.

games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

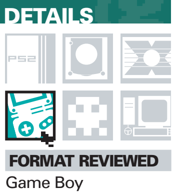
REAR GUNNER: We can't think of any other character that hides a machine gun in his buttocks.

COLOUR ME BAD: The cartoon style of the comics has been captured perfectly.

ASTRO BOY: OMEGA FACTOR

LOOK OUT, WORLD, THERE'S A NEW HERO IN TOWN

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance (US)

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Sega

DEVELOPER
Treasure

PRICE
$29.99

RELEASE
TBA (Japan/US: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1

It's reasonably safe to assume that your average Joe Gamer outside of Japan may not have the foggiest idea who Astro Boy is and will merely assume that he's some form of insignificant yet cute robotic dumpling. This is not the case. Not only is he no relation to dough balls whatsoever, but over in Japan he's hailed as a cartoon hero. Being the first ever Japanese comic character to be turned into an animated series back in the Sixties has created a cult following for the little chap, and now he plans to launch himself in the western world.

As far as making a good first impression goes, *Astro Boy*'s done a grand job. Fanboy favourite Treasure has really stamped its mark on the GBA debut and has produced an impressive little title. Taking control of Astro – the cute little robot kid with a human soul – you must use his unique fighting abilities to take on the forces of evil and restore peace between man and robotkind (a plot almost as twee as the main character himself). This challenge is made much simpler by the fact that Astro has several abilities to give himself the edge in a ruck. As well as the regular punches and kicks that near every un-robotic hero can use, Astro can also use his deadly Finger Laser and Rocket Boots to flit gracefully around the screen and annihilate his enemies.

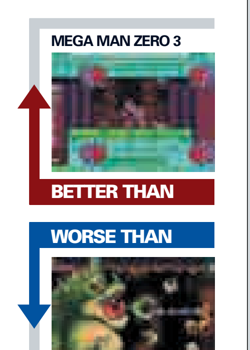
It doesn't end there, though; it's his two Super Moves that really separate this from the average scrolling shooter. Rather than the Super Moves being no more than back-ups only relied upon when the screen is teeming with enemies, Astro's Super Moves form the very base of his attack structure, while his regular moves are only really put into use when specifically called for or when the Super Bar needs a refill. For those that are a little light in the skills department, the Easy and Normal modes will provide an adequate challenge, but for anyone who feels they're up to it, the Hard mode is ridiculously unforgiving and is likely to reduce even the most hardened gamer to tears of frustration.

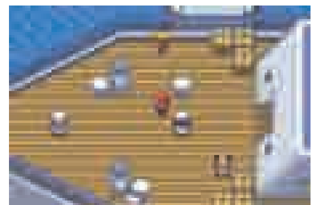
While there may be instances where the lack of a vertically scrolling screen can unfairly get you killed, the quality of the game's other elements is ample compensation for this annoyance. Requiring two playthroughs to get the final ending and with 40 other characters from Osamu Tezuka's iconic anime franchise to hunt down, there's plenty of game here to warrant a trip to your local importer.



VERDICT 7/10

A GREAT ADDITION TO ANY GBA COLLECTION













FORMAT REVIEWED Game Boy Advance **ORIGIN** Japan
PUBLISHER Nintendo **PRICE** £29.99 **RELEASE** Out Now **PLAYERS** 1-4

GOTTA CATCH 'EM ALL OVER AGAIN

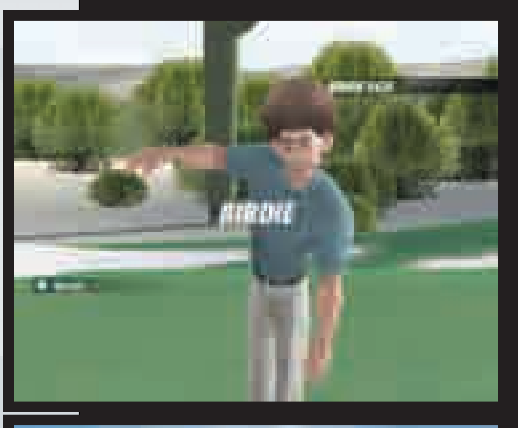
POKÉMON LEAF GREEN/FIRE RED

What with recent surveys proclaiming *Pokémon* the parents' choice when it comes to wholesome gaming, and sporting more dodgy merchandise than the outside of an Oasis gig, it's hardly surprising that Nintendo's monster-catching series has a reputation as a game for kids. But as any avid player will tell you, the *Pokémon* games are far from simple – they're some of the deepest and most rewarding RPGs available on any format and it's criminal that they're seldom recognised as such. These remakes take us back to the series' not-so-humble beginnings, and despite very little having changed since the originals were released, it's incredible just how well the games have stood the test of time.

In addition to a beautifully designed adventure, players are now treated to a whole host of 21st Century luxuries – wireless trading, battling and chatting are possible while a new archipelago allows busy trainers to catch monsters that were but a twinkle in the creators' eyes when *Red* and *Blue* shipped.

But *Leaf Green*/*Fire Red*'s biggest appeal to fans is also its most hateable aspect – these games are needed to complete the catalogue of 386 Pokémon and finally catch them all. For those who thought splitting monsters across two carts was a bit rude originally, this is surely the ultimate swindle. For anyone else, there's a healthy slice of monster hunting to be had.

VERDICT 7/10



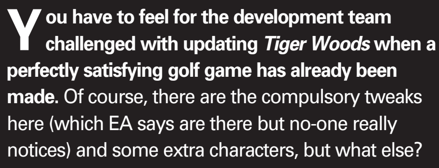





FORMAT Xbox **OTHER FORMATS** PS2, Cube, PC **ORIGIN** Canada
PUBLISHER EA Sports **PRICE** £39.99 **RELEASE** Out Now **PLAYERS** 1-4

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005

TIGER UP A CUT



You have to feel for the development team challenged with updating *Tiger Woods* when a perfectly satisfying golf game has already been made. Of course, there are the compulsory tweaks here (which EA says are there but no-one really notices) and some extra characters, but what else?

The first major distraction from the actual task of playing golf is creating a character using the new GameFace II technology. This allows for near-infinite facial possibilities from a vast array of options. The system's so deep it's realistically possible to make something resembling your own features, especially if you happen to have a Neanderthal brow and a strong superhero chin. The other major addition is TigerProofing. This does to the courses what GameFace II does to your character. You can change the width of the green, the quality of the grass, the patterns, the moisture and the colour of the leaves. It's all there for you to make the most thoroughly gruelling course imaginable.

Aside from these features it's business as usual – everything you expect to be here will be here and it's still one of the best golf titles available. However, it's debatable as to whether or not this is worth buying if you own last year's game. Even though it's our job to make this decision for you, we really can't – it comes down to how rich you are and how much you like golf.

VERDICT 8/10





FORMAT REVIEWED PlayStation2 **OTHER FORMATS** Cube, Xbox, PC
ORIGIN Canada **PUBLISHER** EA **PRICE** £39.99 **RELEASE** Out Now **PLAYERS** 1-8

NHL 2005

THE ICE GAME COMETH

There are no surprises lurking in *NHL 2005*. Last year's Dynasty mode has bulked up to include behind-the-scenes staff such as lawyers and medics, while the need to balance the books and draw crowds means there's always more than what's happening on the ice. World Cup Of Hockey mode also appears in this update, catering for those who want to move out of the US and Canada to play with international teams. On the ice, you can dictate strategies during the breaks in action, giving them some purpose other than showing off EA's trademark presentation.

Otherwise, this is EA's take on NHL action as it's always been, rejigged with improved animations and new moves so it's inevitably the best version yet. The controls have been streamlined, which allows for a slicker game of hockey and does a good job of keeping advanced moves at bay while newcomers get to grips with the basics.

Sadly, the same old bugbear lingers: it's still too hard to slow the action down, so scoring tends to degenerate into pounding the goalkeeper with mindless shots until the law of averages takes over. The improved Dynasty mode makes this easy to excuse although those unfamiliar with ice hockey won't be so forgiving.





FORMAT REVIEWED PlayStation2 **OTHER FORMATS** Xbox **ORIGIN** UK
PUBLISHER Ubisoft **PRICE** £39.99 **RELEASE** Out Now **PLAYERS** 1-2

VENOM LEAVES US A LITTLE PUNCH-DRUNK

ROCKY LEGENDS

The original *Rocky* game was, to be fair, rather good – it managed to add the best bits of the films to a boxing game that could have easily stood on its own without the licence helping it along. Despite the fact that developer Rage has now ceased to exist, Venom Games has risen from the still-smouldering ashes, so we were expecting *Rocky Legends* to be of a similar quality if not better. And while the sequel doesn't exactly surpass the original, it's at least a fair crack at the boxing genre.

Made as a prequel to *Rocky*, the thing that provides the most entertainment is the game's all-new Career mode. This allows you to take the raw mould of your favourite film character – Rocky, Apollo, Clubba or Drago – through their early years and lead them right through to the top titles. Between each fight, you'll have the opportunity to choose which set of skills you wish to work on (through gruelling training mini-games) and can level up your fighter however you feel best suits your style of fighting.

Graphical improvements have been made, the all-important 'Gonna Fly Now' by Bill Conti drives you on as the matches draw to a close, and with more than 40 opponents to KO you'll get enough out of this whether you're a boxing fan, *Rocky* nut or both. Shame it's still not as good as EA's *Fight Night*…









FORMAT REVIEWED GameCube **ORIGIN** Japan **PUBLISHER** Nintendo
PRICE £39.99 **RELEASE** Out Now **PLAYERS** 1-4

PAN-PAN INDEED

DONKEY KONGA

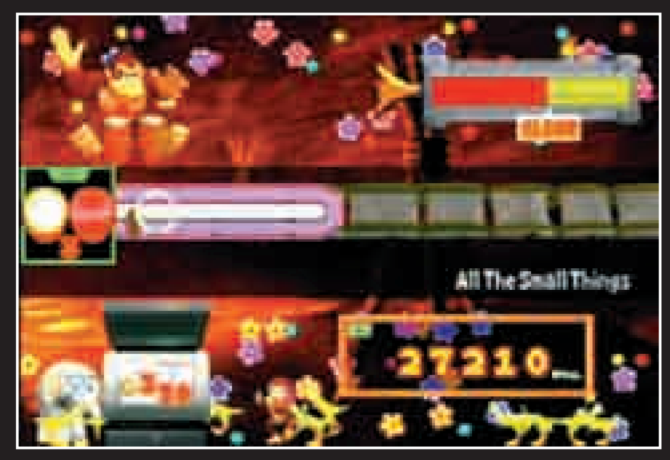
We can't say we weren't sceptical when news first broke about Nintendo's 'innovative' new bongo peripheral. We were even more wary about its use in *Donkey Kong: Jungle Beat* (which is actually surprisingly enjoyable). But when the Japanese *Donkey Konga* arrived in the office, it was impossible to work for overly loud drum-beating, crazy J-pop tunes and an obscene amount of giggling.

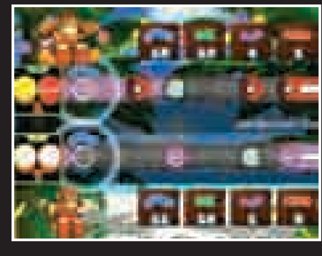
■ You all know the concept by now – drum along to a series of tunes using the drum controller (which also detects handclaps) while trying to stay in time as best you can and not get evicted for making too much noise. In all honesty, we've been spoiled by the excellent *Donkey Konga 2: Hit Song Parade*, a game that accentuates just how little there actually is in the PAL release (a tweaked port of the original – why couldn't the wait be rewarded with the superior sequel?).

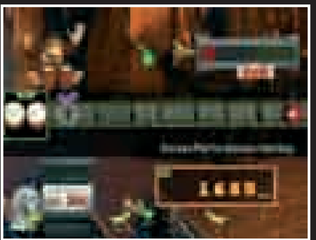
■ 'Licensed' tunes feel somewhat out of place and are cover versions that veer violently from the decent to the offensive in terms of both selection and quality. Does anyone really want to play bongos along to Blink 182's 'All The Small Things'? Didn't think so.

■ This is fundamentally sound and great fun to play (if rather simple for rhythm action veterans), it's just a shame that Nintendo didn't deem the British public worthy of all the great content that's no doubt being held back for the sequel.

VERDICT 6/10













FORMAT REVIEWED PlayStation2 **ORIGIN** Japan **PUBLISHER** Capcom
PRICE £19.99 **RELEASE** Out Now **PLAYERS** 1

VIEWTIFUL JOE

YOU GOT THE TOUCH, YOU GOT THE POWER

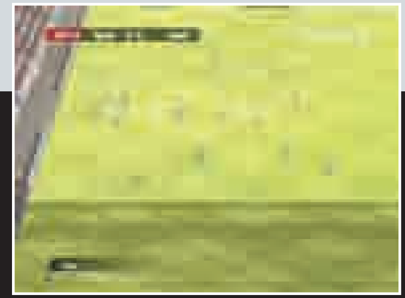
With genre-straddling at an all-time high in gaming at the moment, there's nothing we like more than to see a title that chooses its route, sticks to it and comes out on top. *Viewtiful Joe* is one such game and while the simple jump/punch/kick mechanics might seem a little basic, their execution and the sheer potential that arises from the gradual introduction of your three VFX powers makes this every bit as reliant on player skill as something like *Ikaruga*.

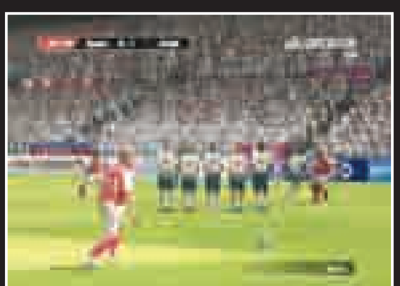
□ Sure, the game is just as taxing as such hardcore shooters but a new simpler skill setting for the PS2 version opens up the game to the less patient audience associated with the console while still offering hair-tearing thrills for those who consider themselves hard enough.

□ What with new playable character Dante controlling differently enough to Joe to warrant at least another playthrough, the reduced difficulty and the new lower price, there's plenty here for gamers of all inclinations. This is without a doubt one of Capcom's finest offerings for the Sony console, setting it in great stead for the upcoming sequel. A sublime clash of old-school action and devious design, *Joe* on PS2 is more Viewtiful than ever.









FORMAT Xbox **OTHER FORMATS** PS2, Cube, PC, GBA **ORIGIN** Canada
PUBLISHER EA Sports **PRICE** £39.99 **RELEASE** 15 October **PLAYERS** 1-4

FIFA FOOTBALL 2005

IT'S STILL NO EVOLUTION

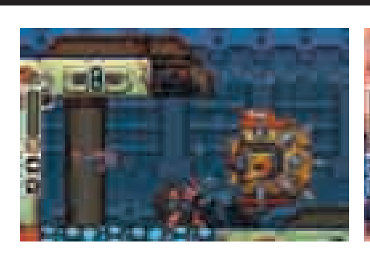
In the same way the incarnations of *FIFA* that spin out each year hardly change (despite what the press releases would have us believe), the reviews don't differ much either. It's always the same story: some minor refinement is evident and the presentation and proper player names are always praised, yet the clunky, slightly unresponsive player actions and *FIFA*'s undoubted inferiority to *Pro Evolution Soccer* are always drawbacks.

Unfortunately, it's the same story once more. This year it's the "all-new fluid player kinetic system" that's providing the token upgrade. What this deceptively titled addition means is that players now react quicker and more like their real-life counterparts when handling the first touch of the ball. And first touches are generally smoother now, with players being able to flick on, trap or kick straight away on receipt. In practice, however, it's not such a massive advancement and the player movement and control is still fairly sluggish.

As ever, the presentation and options give *FIFA* any kind of edge over *Pro Evolution Soccer*. The commentary is of a much higher standard and replays, on-screen score displays and player likenesses all effortlessly ease you into the action. It's a shame the action couldn't be more like football too.

Its online gameplay would have saved it – but recent news from EGN has revealed that *Pro Evolution Soccer 4* is going to be playable online over Xbox Live and, to be honest, that's where our money and much of our time is going.

VERDICT 5/10









FORMAT Game Boy Advance **ORIGIN** Japan **PUBLISHER** Capcom
PRICE £39.99 **RELEASE** Out Now **PLAYERS** 1

HE'S BACK WITH ZERO TOLERANCE

MEGA MAN ZERO 3

It's fair to say that when you pick up the latest *Mega Man* game you know exactly what you're going to get: a side-scrolling platform shoot-fest featuring a robot who, for some reason, isn't able to duck. You know that each of the themed bosses will take you an age to finish off unless you're extremely lucky as well as a skilled player. But above all you'll be sure that the game in your hands is going to be great.

Mega Man has enjoyed many successful titles on nearly every platform and we can't think of a single one that we could confidently label as 'rubbish'. Unsurprisingly, *Mega Man Zero 3* doesn't break the mould, but we wouldn't want it any other way.

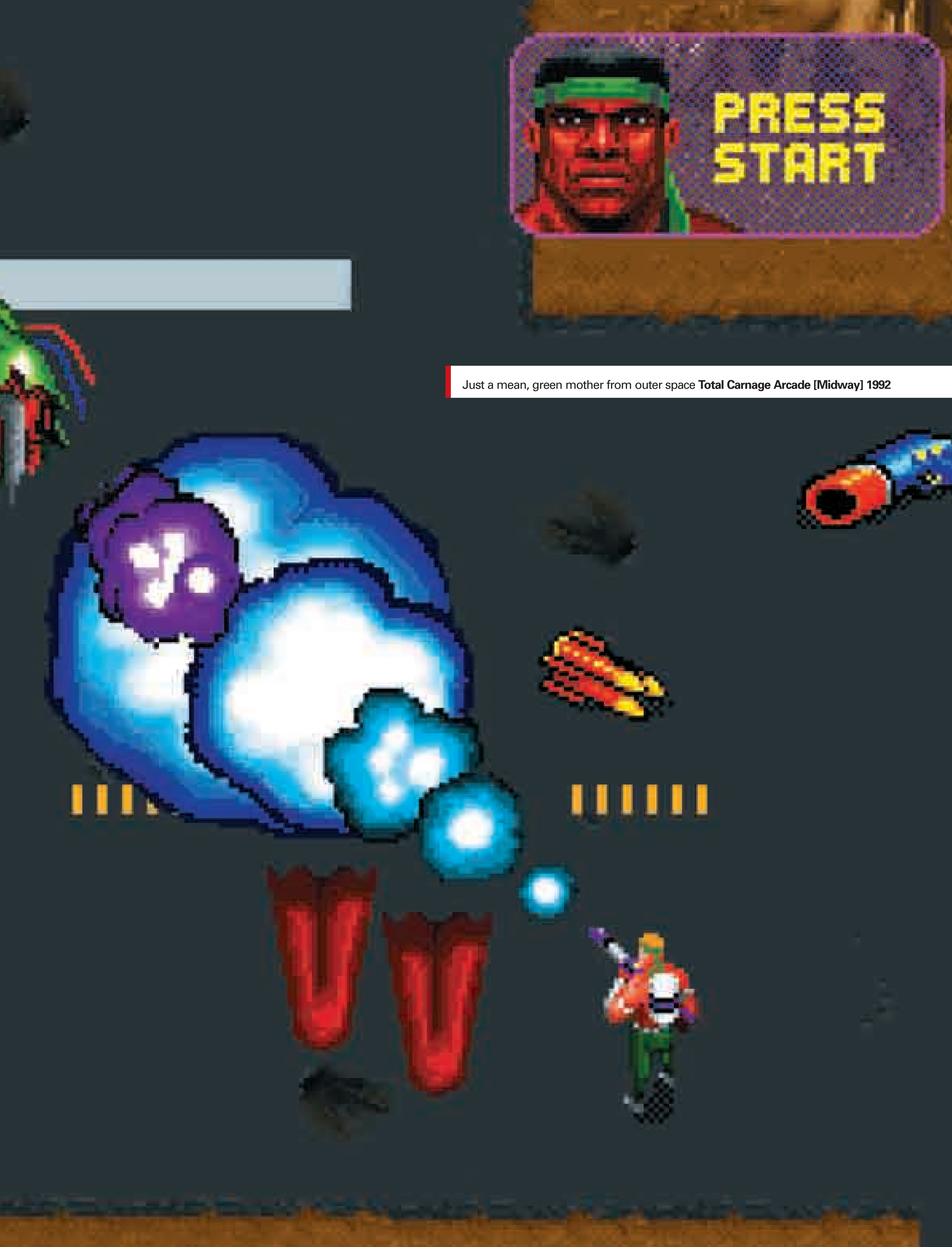
If you're unfamiliar with the series then the bombardment of characters and names that will immediately greet you could be a little intimidating, but if you just push the veil of complex storyline aside, it's simply a good, solid platform game like its predecessor and a fine example of the genre.

If there's one thing for certain, it's that you won't be simply strolling through the game. The levels may be easy enough to pass through, but the two bosses on each level will soon hinder your progress. Fun and challenging, *Mega Man Zero 3* is bound to satisfy your gaming needs for a fair while. And if you want more then try the *Anniversary Collection*.

VERDICT 7/10



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Just a mean, green mother from outer space **Total Carnage Arcade [Midway] 1992**


eMag


RETRO
MICRO GAMES ACTION
A PARAGON PUBLICATION
NO.24 OCT 2004
00p
THE MONTHLY OLD-SCHOOL SOFTWARE REVIEW
Midway Arcade Treasures 2 Reviewed Inside
BACK TO SCHOOL WITH SKOOL DAZE
6 OF THE BEST VECTREX GAMES
Classic Machine: GCE's Vectrex
DIZZY
Will it ever get remade?
NEW INTERVIEW WITH DAVID BRABEN
PLUS
RETRO NEWS,
UNSUNG HEROES,
WORST LICENCE EVER,
BUYERS GUIDE & GTM,
RETRO CONTACT,
ULTIMATE COLLECTION
AND MUCH MORE...

Retro News

Find out what's going on in the here and now of retro gaming

It's not very often you work in a job that you truly love. Fortunately, I'm one of the lucky ones who can't wait to get into work every day (even on a Monday). Sure, deadlines are tough and researching features can sometimes take forever, but on the flipside, I play retro games, share my opinions with you, the readers, and above all get paid for my efforts.

Yup, life is pretty sweet at the moment, but sometimes I feel a like bit fake and have to question my devotion to retro gaming. Have I started up my own website that attempts to track down every C64 title that remains unpublished? Would I be prepared to start up my own fanzine for little or no monetary gain in order to share my passion with others? Or will I ever organise a massive Retro event, just so I can share my passion with other like-minded individuals?

The answer to all the above questions is, sadly, no. Fortunately, there are people out there who are willing to do all this and more, and it's these unsung heroes who I'll now be interviewing on a regular basis. Keith Ainsworth, Chris Millard and Frank Gasking are just a few of the hard-working individuals whose dedication often goes unnoticed. So next time you're reading a fascinating nugget of info on the net, or are browsing through your latest issue of *Retro Fanzine* monthly, spare a thought for the dedicated people who made it.



Darran Jones, Retro Editor

Chrono Trigger resurrection is no more

Square Enix tells programmers to cease and desist

Squaresoft's *Chrono Trigger* was one of our favourite RPGs for the SNES and we've been waiting for a remake for years. Imagine our joy, then, when we learned that Nathan Lazur and a selection of other talented programmers were working on their own stunning looking remake.

Sadly, Nathan has now been told to stop work on the project by Square Enix and his dream is no longer going to become a reality. We spoke to Nathan to find out what inspired him to remake this classic title and how he feels about its cancellation.

▼ It could have been good. Hell, it could have been great. But a fancy new *Chrono Trigger* just isn't happening.



g™: What was the inspiration behind remaking *Chrono Trigger*?

NL: There was no single inspiration that drove me to making this project, it was more than one thing and definitely more than one time. During high school I was bored with learning something I would never use, so I spent time at home learning programming. At the time, I was playing *Chrono Trigger* on the SNES and *Super Mario 64* on the N64, so I told myself, 'If I ever learn programming, I'm going to remake *Chrono Trigger* on the N64'.

I spent the whole summer learning programming by teaching myself and by the time school started I was ready to start programming on the N64 (using homebrew tools, of course). I started to get something together for a semi-working 3D test on the N64 in about a month; soon after, I started searching for people to help me.

Unfortunately, I had to discontinue development after my brother accidentally formatted my computer while I was away for the summer. In spite of the loss, I went on to coding for the Dreamcast and its VMU, and it was then that I felt really inspired to continue my dream, because that's when I first played *Chrono Cross*.

g™: How long had you been working on this *Chrono Trigger* remake?

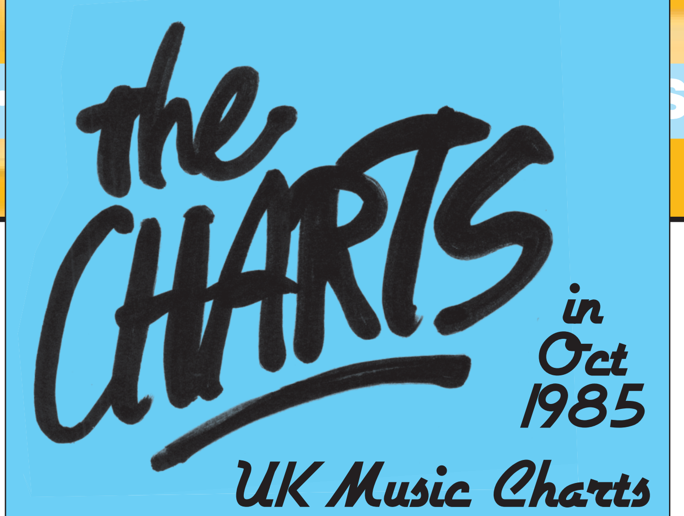
NL: The current iteration of this project started development in April 2003. I started to gather the former musician of CT64, Mat Valente, and placed an ad on Gamasutra for 3D artists; it took about a month to start production after that. We then started working on a basic prototype while building the appropriate engine technology, as this helped to see what was needed technically as we were progressing. It wasn't until Luis Martins joined the team that I became really inspired about the quality of the demo and soon everyone on the team really started to work hard.

g™: How do you feel about the recent cease and desist letter from Square Enix?

NL: While we regret [we have] to stop development, we really have no choice. Square owns the IP and it is its legal right to protect it, but I felt honoured to even be recognised by Square Enix and I can understand its position. What is curious, though, is that Square knew about the project when we first announced it, as we saw its proxy in our web log. It took it three months to shut it down, so we asked ourselves, 'Why not sooner?'

g™: Do you think you're doing anything wrong by remaking these classic games?

NL: No, I don't think we're doing anything wrong at all. We're just some dedicated fans who want to truly understand one of our favourite games. Square has every right to want to stop a project that might make it lose its copyright, though.



UK Music Charts

1	THE POWER OF LOVE	JENNIFER RUSH
2	IF I WAS	MIDGE URE
3	TRAPPED	COLONEL ABRAMS
4	LEAN ON ME (AH-LI-AYO)	RED BOX
5	REBEL YELL	BILLY IDOL
6	PART TIME LOVER	STEVIE WONDER
7	TAKE ON ME	A-HA
8	ST. ELMO'S FIRE (MAN IN MOTION)	JOHN PARR
9	DANCING IN THE STREET	DAVID BOWIE AND MICK JAGGER
10	HOLDING OUT FOR A HERO	BONNIE TYLER

Games you were playing in 1985

1	THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK	ATARI
2	FANTASY ZONE	SEGA
3	GAUNTLET	ATARI
4	METRO-CROSS	NAMCO
5	RETURN OF THE INVADERS	ATARI
6	ROAD RUNNER	ATARI
7	SKY KID	NAMCO
8	SPACE HARRIER	SEGA
9	TERRA CRESTA	NIHON BUSSAN
10	GRADIUS	KONAMI

GAMING NEWS

More bullet mayhem for the Dreamcast

Milestone reveals shooter for the Dreamcast

Great shooters never die – they just end up on the Dreamcast. Due out in Japan at the end of the year, Milestone's *Chaos Field* looks more than able to fill the shoes of titles like *Psyvariar 2* and *Ikaruga*. While little has been revealed about the new shmup, we do know that you'll be able to lock onto enemies, and shield yourself while damaging opponents. The most interesting feature is the Field Changing mechanic. Stick to the Order field and you'll face less frequent enemies and encounter numerous power-ups; move to the Chaos field, and while your firepower increases, enemies become much more aggressive.



Mega Man slips

Capcom's Mega Man compilation faces delay

If you've not found any import stores selling the *Mega Man Anniversary Collection* for the GBA just yet, don't worry, you're not going mad, it's simply been delayed. It would appear that the compilation of five *Mega Man* Game Boy titles is now going to be available from the beginning of November, so there's plenty of time to scrape some money together and enjoy some intense Mega Man platforming action. The GameCube version was reviewed last issue and received a very healthy 74% so we're definitely looking forward to the Game Boy Advance iterations. Needless to say, you can expect a review in a future issue of Retro.

Last Month's Jaguar Screenshots

1ST ROW	2ND ROW	3RD ROW	4TH ROW	5TH ROW	6TH ROW	7TH ROW	8TH ROW
Pinball Fantasies, Chequered Flag, Club Drive, Dragon's Lair, Hover Strike, Myst, Soccer Kid, Soul Star, Val d'Isere Skiing & Snowboard, Vid Grid	Space Ace, Cannon Fodder, Commander Blood, Evolution Dino Dudes, Hyper Force, NBA Jam Tournament Edition, Skyhammer, Baldies, Ultra Vortek, Super Burnout	Apeshit, Bubsy: Fractured Furry Tales, Cybermorph, Fever Pitch Soccer, I-War, Ocean Depths, Sky Copter, Space War 2000, Ultimate Brain Games, Wolfenstein 3D	Atari Karts, Zoop!, Defender 2000, Fight For Life, International Sensible Soccer, Brutal Sports Football, Ruiner Pinball, Speedster 2, Troy Aikman NFL Football, World Tour Racing	Attack Of The Mutant Penguins, Breakout 2000, Deus Ex Machina, Flashback: The Quest For Identity, Iron Soldier, Painter, Rayman, Syndicate, Trevor McFur In The Crescent Galaxy, Worms	Alien Vs Predator, BrainDead 13, Doom, Flip Out, Iron Soldier II, Air Cars, Raiden, Supercross 3D, Towers II, Zero 5	BattleSphere, Blue Lightning, Double Dragon V, Freelancer, Kasumi Ninja, Pitfall The Mayan Adventure, Protector, White Men Can't Jump, Hover Stereotrike: Unconquered Lands, Zool 2	Battlemorph, Black Ice, Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story, Highlander, Missile Command 3D, Power Drive Rally, Primal Rage, Tempest 2000, Theme Park, Phazero

Retro DIARY

As old-school gaming gets more mainstream, it's about time everyone knew about upcoming retro events

OCTOBER '04

The Classic Computer and Gaming Show (CCAG)

Date: 23 October **Location:** St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, 5885 Hopkins Road, Mentor, Ohio, USA **Price:** Free

A popular event for casual gamers and serious sellers, the CCAG has been running since 2000 and will feature plenty of vendors and classic speakers. Spend those Air Miles.

Eurocon 2004

Date: 29-31 Oct **Location:** Ibis-Accor Hotel, Scheveninger, Holland

Price: Unconfirmed

This year's Eurocon event will feature extensive trade sessions, the ability to compete against other gamers on classic titles, and a quiz and auction. It's nearer than America, so you've no excuse not to go.

Midway Arcade Treasures 2

Date: 29 October **Publisher:** Midway **Price:** £14.99

The next *Arcade Treasures* will feature 20 more classic titles and is a must for retro gamers. A third title has yet to be confirmed, but when it happens we'll let you know

JANUARY '05

Sonic Mega Collection Plus

Date: TBC **Publisher:** Sega **Price:** TBC

Already available on the GameCube, *Sonic Mega Collection Plus* will give Xbox and PlayStation2 owners even more hedgehog-based titles, making this a promising looking collection.

FEBRUARY '05

Retrovision

Date: 11-14 Feb **Location:** The George Hotel, Frome, Somerset

Price: £10-£25

Next year's Retrovision is looking like being yet another four days of great classic gaming. Competitions will be held on the likes of the Dreamcast, Commodore 64 and the Vic20. There'll be plenty of traders and stalls and you can guarantee that there'll be loads of retro games to play. You may even see Jeff Minter hanging around…

JULY '05

GCE UK

Date: 30-31 July **Location:** TBA **Price:** TBA

After the success of this year's event, we've been told that another GCE is now a guaranteed certainty. Little is known as to who will be opening the event, but it looks like GCE UK is keen to get hold of Dominik Diamond

AUGUST '05

Classic Gaming Expo (CGE)

Date: TBA **Location:** TBA **Price:** TBA

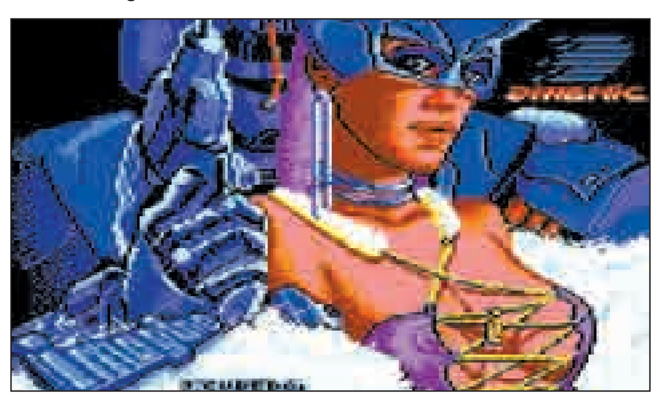
Last year's event was attended by none other than Konami and Midway and proved to be a huge success. As the expo prepares to enter its eighth year, you can guarantee that 2005's event will be even better.

If you know of, or are hosting, any retro events, please contact Darran Jones on darranj@paragon.co.uk

CLASSIC LOADING SCREENS

NO 1: GAME OVER

Back in the Eighties, publishers would try anything to ensure their latest title got noticed. Just check out this rather dubious looking loading screen for Dinamic's *Game Over*. If you were a 14-year old schoolboy, chances are this could well have been the best game ever…



Website Of The Month

This issue we look at Frank Gasking's superb Games That Weren't 64 site

Ever wondered what happens to all those games that were always in development, but never actually released? You'll find your saviour in Frank Gasking.

Games That Weren't 64 specialises in tracking down and cataloguing every unreleased C64 title that Gasking can lay his hands on. Thanks to numerous resources (including interviews with many developers), Frank has been able to shed light on the likes of *Armalyte 2*, *Solar Jetman*, *Tyger Tyger* and more. These are often backed up with details on why the game was never released and numerous screenshots. Visit: http://homepage.ntlworld.com/frank.gasking.

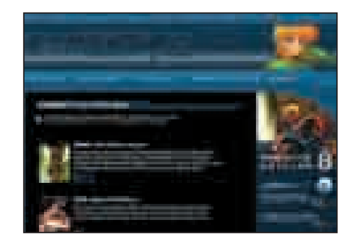


Fanzine Corner

We uncover the unsung heroes who slave away on their own retro fanzines

Although *Gamestyle Offline* has been covering older games since its first issue, it now has a section dedicated to retro gaming.

Contained within the latest issue you'll find an informative article on Spextrum (the new Spectrum emulator for the Xbox), an in-depth look at the mystery surrounding *Mire Mare*, and reviews of *Conker's Bad Fur Day* and *Wizball*. The current issue features new content that won't be available anywhere else. Perhaps the best aspect of *Gamestyle Offline* is the fact that it wont cost you a penny, as it's free to download from www.gamestyle.net/offline.php.



THE £50 CHALLENGE

It's amazing what you can find for the price of a new game nowadays, so each issue we'll be looking around for retro bargains and displaying our finds

Sometimes you can find a bargain in the most unlikely of places and this month's is no exception. Now, I wouldn't normally trust the missus to come home with a gaming bargain, but the wife done good when she picked up this little beauty at this year's Dorset Steam Fair. She presented me with a huge, heavy parcel, which I gingerly opened only to find two Mega Drive IIs, all the relevant leads and power supplies, and 15 games.

Sure, some are missing their boxes and are a bit naff, but amongst the rubbish there was *Speedball II, Mickey Mouse: Castle Of Illusion, Dynamite Heady* and *Contra: Hardcorps*. Not bad at all, especially when you consider that all that lot only cost a fiver. Bargain!



Your Game

This month you can choose a Mega Drive title

Unhappy because we haven't covered your favourite game yet? Don't despair, every month you'll be able to vote for the title you'd like to see in our 'Greatest Retro Game Ever' feature. We'll give you a list of choices and you'll have three votes. Your first choice will net five points, second will receive three, while the last will get one. You can vote by emailing darranj@paragon.co.uk, or head over to www.gamestm.co.uk.

- **Streets Of Rage 2**
- **The Revenge Of Shinobi**
- **Thunder Force III**
- **Soleil**
- **Mickey Mouse: Castle Of Illusion**
- **Strider**
- **Land Stalker**
- **Sonic The Hedgehog**



Retro REMAKE

Each month we'll be looking at a classic game that's received a makeover for a new generation of gamers. This month we track down Dean Swain and take a look at his remakes of Double Dragon for the Spectrum 128 and Target Renegade for the PC.

Q) Why Double Dragon and Target Renegade?

I've always been a big fan of the original arcade version of *Double Dragon*. Back in 1987 when it was first released, me and my classmates really got caught up in the buzz caused by the game – *Double Dragon* was definitely a game of the moment. As for *Target Renegade*, it filled *Double Dragon*'s gap in the home computer market. Ocean Software missed out on the official *Double Dragon* licence, so it took liberties with the *Renegade* licence that it already had and made its own sequel.

Q) Why are you remaking Double Dragon for the Spectrum rather than a current system?

The official conversion by Binary Design was really poor and 14 years later I still felt that the Speccy deserved a better version. I started a discussion on the World Of Spectrum forum, 16 pages later it appeared that plenty of people felt the same way as I did and wanted to see if we could better the original conversion.

Q) How hard has the remake process been?

I'm only handling the graphics, Dmitry Ponomarev is the poor guy who's doing the coding, while Matthew Westcott has done a top job converting the arcade soundtrack to the AY chip. I can't really comment on the programming side of things apart from it's obviously a nightmare trying to fit the bugger into 128k. Graphically, things haven't been easy because of the amount of animation involved and the old Spectrum problem of attribute clash. Still, I think it's looking better than the original conversion.

Q) How long has it taken so far?

So far it's taken about 10 months, which I know is a long time but we are making this project in our spare time at our own pace. Graphically the project is complete, although there's bound to be some changes needed. Matthew has about 90 per cent of the music complete and Dmitry has probably had a nervous breakdown.

Q) Any problems with copyright?

I've written to Atlus (the current copyright holders of *Double Dragon*) numerous times and they have never replied. I'll try again once the project is complete and see what happens.



Great RETRO Gaming Moments

S•U•P•E•R G•H•O•U•L•S A•N•D G•H•O•S•T•S

Year: 1991
Format: SNES
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-House

If ever there was proof that a great gaming moment doesn't necessarily have to be good, then *Super Ghouls & Ghosts* is the perfect example. Not only was it one of the toughest games available on the SNES, but Capcom had also stuck in a horrific twist that would stay with you forever.

Picture the scene: it's late, you're twitching like a hyperactive four-year-old because you've drunk too much coffee, and you're finally reaching the end of the game. You've passed through snowy mountainsides and lava-filled caverns, and vanquished some of the most troublesome bosses to ever grace the SNES, but finally the end is in sight – or is it…



Fully armoured and tooled-up you go face to face against the final boss. It's a gruelling battle, but you eventually emerge victorious and prepare to meet the princess you're out to save. Unfortunately, Capcom has one final trick up its sleeve and it's a real kick in the balls. The princess tells you that the only way to rescue her is to find the Goddess Bracelet that she hid from the enemy – only then can you face the final deadly boss, Sardius.



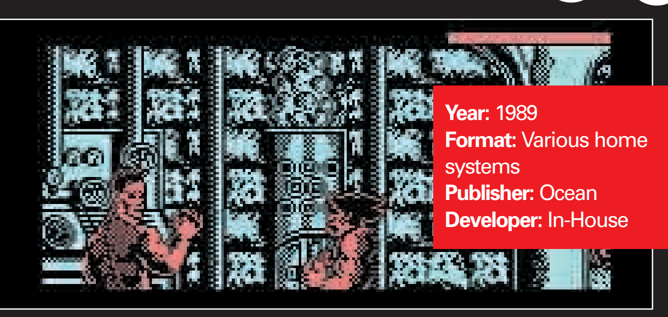
You're then unceremoniously dumped back at the beginning of the game, where you have to complete the entire epic all over again. Dumbfounded, you simply stare at the screen, not registering what just happened.

As the first ghouls start to appear, realisation suddenly dawns on you and you quickly turn the bugger off…

Worst LICENCE EVER

Although films, books and TV have produced some great game tie-ins they haven't always worked. In a new feature, we examine some of the very worst examples

RED HEAT



▶ Pity Arnie – he just couldn't get a break in many of his videogame outings. Most of his early titles were utter rubbish like this sorry example and gameplay often consisted of simple run 'n' gun fare. Oh, the humanity…

Year: 1989
Format: Various home systems
Publisher: Ocean
Developer: In-House

Poor old Arnie. Despite redefining action movies in the late Eighties with his monosyllabic mumblings and rippling pecs, his films have been converted into some pretty naff games over the years. Of course, when you're basing your new game on something as incredibly inane as *Red Heat,* you're pretty much stuffed from the word go, but even we were surprised with just how bad the home versions of this dud movie actually were.

Although James Belushi takes a starring role in the film, little Jimmy is nowhere to be seen in the actual game and the on-screen action instead chooses to focus on Arnie as his punches and shoots his way through the game's four levels. As you make your way through the scrolling levels the politically incorrect Commie bad guys constantly assault you. Fortunately, a quick right hook or bullet to the face is more than enough to stop their advance but their sheer numbers will soon start to overwhelm you.

As far as gameplay goes, that's about it. Ocean may have added a few simple mini-games to break up the monotony of the main game, but the difficulty of *Red Heat* means you're unlikely to ever see them.

Although it featured some fairly decent visuals (strangely, the 8-bit versions managed a better replication of Arnie than their more powerful 16-bit counterparts), nothing could disguise the fact that this was one of the most boring film licences ever created. Indeed, even a few minutes' play reminded us just how bad this game was the first time around.



MORTAL KOMBAT (Arcade) Midway, 1992 – US Arcade Flyer

Why Don't They Remake... DIZZY

EGGS ARE GOOD FOR YOU – EVEN ONES WEARING BOXING GLOVES

Release: **1987**
Format: **Various Home Systems**
Publisher: **Codemasters**
Developer: **The Oliver Twins**

Some people get cravings for chocolate or burgers. Any pregnant readers may even be hankering after a handful of coal or a delicious ham and custard sandwich (or some other foul concoction). But we just can't get enough eggs…

Created by Philip and Andrew Oliver in 1987, Dizzy was a tenacious little egg who starred in a series of very well-received flick-screen outings. There can't be many gamers who aren't familiar with 'The Ultimate Cartoon Adventure' (Codemasters' words, not ours), but for the uninitiated, the plot is hardly complicated. The evil wizard Zaks is up to no good and is planning to destroy the realm of Katmandu. None too happy about this, Dizzy sets about collecting a series of ingredients that, when combined, will spell the end of the wicked sorcerer.

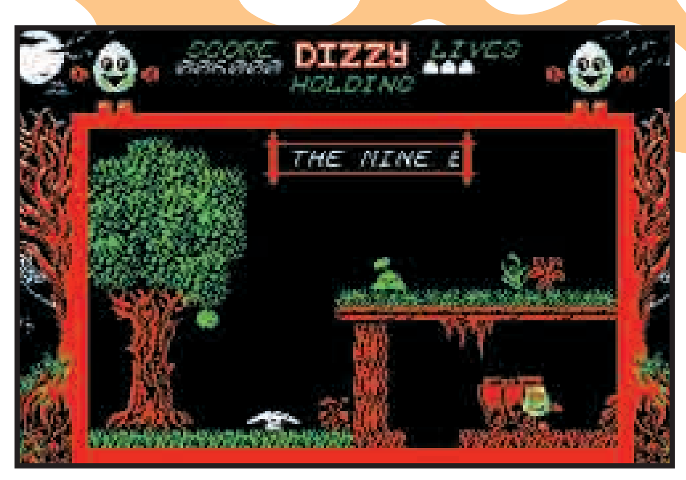
Spread across 53 static screens, completing *Dizzy* is quite an undertaking and it's definitely not a game for the faint-hearted (or those who are quick to anger). Throughout his adventure our ovoid hero encounters simple puzzles that need to be solved in order to progress. If there's a mine cart blocking your way, it may be an idea to use that grease gun to get it moving. Can't get the fire lit in order to heat your up your potion? Use that torch you found earlier. For all the game's well thought-out puzzles, however, Dizzy's ability to only carry one item at a time proved frustrating; while it was obviously an attempt to extend the game's longevity, it made for some tedious backtracking.



▲ Dizzy faced many obstacles on his adventures. Fortunately, this ghost caused few problems for the plucky egg.

The infamous bridge also caused many headaches, and if it wasn't cleared correctly it became impossible to finish the game – highly frustrating, especially when you consider that it needed to be crossed several times. Despite these niggles, *Dizzy* received positive reviews and quickly built up a very loyal fan base. Although controlling Dizzy took a little while to get used to (whenever he jumped, he would immediately roll along the floor for a short distance) the charming visuals, bouncy tunes and enjoyable locations were more than enough to make up for *Dizzy*'s shortfalls.

Although we'd be extremely happy to see the return of *Dizzy*,



▲ Using the Grease Gun on the Mine Cart would cause it to move. You could then gain access to the mines.



▲ There's something reassuring about a 2D egg. Those three-dimensional ones freak us out. Even real ones.





▲ Fearless in the face of adversity, spooky graveyards and slightly unconvincing bats. That's our Dizzy.

we can't say that we'd be too pleased with a 3D version of our hero, especially after seeing the recent 3D demo on Blitz Games's website. Maybe it was the shock of seeing Dizzy in three dimensions, or maybe we've been stung by too many other platforming heroes who've lost all their identity when translated into 3D. Whatever, in our minds, Dizzy should remain in 2D, and let's face it, the GBA would make the perfect home for him.

It's important to remember that Dizzy was a hero who was born out of necessity, rather than design. "Our graphics package had the ability to rotate an image through any number of degrees and save it out. In those days that was a cool feature so we thought we'd include a cart-wheeling character in our new game," explain the Oliver twins on their website, www.olivertwins.com. "The only problem was that a character of any detail broke up too much during this process so we decided to keep [Dizzy] simple, and maybe that's part of its charm." They're not wrong.

MEET THE YOLK FOLK

As Dizzy became more popular we were eventually introduced to his extensive family. Daisy is Dizzy's girlfriend, Denzil is a streetwise egg with a penchant for listening to music and playing on his ZX80, while Dora is Dizzy's ugly sister. Dylan is a bit of a hippy, Dozy constantly falls asleep and Grand Dizzy is an angry old egg who's not at all happy with Dizzy stealing the limelight. Last but by no means least is Pogie, Dizzy's pet Fluffy, a little furry rodent who just loves cheese and exploring.

Hell, we'd be quite happy with a cartridge featuring all his previous titles (complete with *Mario Allstars*-style graphical enhancements), but an all-new adventure with a better inventory system and maybe some RPG elements wouldn't go amiss either. Come on, boys, how about making some old gamers happy?

GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT

SWEEVO'S WORLD

Year: 1986
Format: Spectrum, Amstrad
Publisher: Gargoyle Games
Developer: Greg Follis, Roy Carter

Once Rare found success with the likes of *Knight Lore* and *Alien 8*, it was inevitable that other developers would jump on the isometric bandwagon. While titles like *Head Over Heels* and *Batman* are rightly remembered for their excellent visuals and superb gameplay, other equally great titles have been long since forgotten. *Sweevo's World* is a perfect example of a game that set the world alight when it appeared – it was a Crash Smash and a Rave in *Amstrad Action* – but now seems little more than a distant memory.

What set *Sweevo's World* apart from similar titles was the sheer bizarreness that went on within the strange planetoid of Knutz Folly in which the Self-Willed Extreme Environment Vocational Organism found himself. As the instruction book explained, "scoring is very complex and largely irrelevant, but remember, for Sweevo to reach full active status, all other organisms must be eliminated." Basically this entailed making your way through the extremely strange (though well-detailed) environments and working out which objects would defeat which creatures.



▼ As if solving puzzles on one level wasn't bad enough, you had to travel up and down too.

The four levels – The First Cut, Dead Centre, Waiting Room and Fruit Salad – were massive and required pixel-perfect timing and nerves of steel to negotiate, and instead of existing on a single flat plane they had several layers that had to be visited via lifts and holes. Drawing diagrams on graph paper was essential if you ever wanted to complete this sprawling adventure.

Featuring fantastic looking visuals, some deep gameplay and an offbeat sense of humour, *Sweevo's World* was a classic example of taking a well-known genre and making it your own. What a shame no-one ever talks about it.



CLASH OF THE TITANS

C.H.A.S.E H.Q



As gaming infiltrated the home market a new breed of gamer evolved. Dubbed the 'fanboy', he associated himself with a certain genre, machine or even a developer or publisher, and then ridiculed all that opposed him. First recorded in playgrounds in the early Eighties, typical arguments revolved around who had the better machine, or which game looked best on which format. We aim to put a stop to years of petty squabbling by finding the definitive versions of some classic titles. This month, we take the 8-bit computer versions of *Chase HQ* for a spin.

ROUND 1: VISUALS

COMMODORE 64: What on Earth is going on here? Blocky visuals, a poor sense of speed and lazy programming totally kill what could have been a great arcade port. The programmers have basically taken the Spectrum backgrounds (minus plenty of objects) and simply placed coloured sprites on top – the results are far from pretty.

SPECTRUM: Okay, so it may be using the typical monochrome visuals for which the Spectrum is famous, but this is a frighteningly good conversion. Huge, detailed sprites, plenty of background objects (including Level 2's helicopter) and a decent representation of speed all combine to create an extremely faithful conversion that's made all the more impressive by the Spectrum's hardware abilities.

AMSTRAD: With past Amstrad racers like *OutRun* and *Power Drift* all failing to give a decent sensation of speed, we were expecting similar things from *Chase HQ*. Fortunately, this isn't the case and we have a bright, colourful racer that looks great. It was a close call between the Spectrum and Amstrad, but we're going to back the good ol' Speccy.

WINNER: SPECTRUM
RUNNER UP: AMSTRAD

ROUND 2: AUDIO

COMMODORE 64: Even the mighty SID chip can't save the C64. The main tune is nauseatingly bouncy and plays throughout the game, and while it's similar to the Spectrum version we expected better. Perhaps the biggest oversight is that this lacks the speech that's in the Amstrad and Spectrum 128k versions.

SPECTRUM: While the 48k version is nothing special, much more of an effort has been made with the 128k edition. The same tune as the C64 version plays on the menu screen (though, thankfully, it's not available during the game) and the sound effects are of a decent standard. Best of all is the cool digitised speech. "Let's go, Mr Driver…"

AMSTRAD: There's no music at all on the Amstrad – even the 128k version is devoid of tunes. Fortunately, the sound effects throughout the game are of a very high standard (especially the authentic sounding Turbo Boost) and the 128k edition includes speech.

WINNER: SPECTRUM
RUNNER UP: AMSTRAD

ROUND 3: GAMEPLAY

COMMODORE 64: As well as running like a snail, *Chase HQ* on the C64 also plays like one. Controls are astonishingly sluggish (especially with a joystick) and the lack of speed totally kills any enjoyment you have for the game. Shockingly dull to play and one of the worst C64 arcade conversions we can think of.

SPECTRUM: While it's not as responsive as its arcade parent, the Spectrum still plays a bloody good game of *Chase HQ* and definitely lets you recapture the chase-and-smash gameplay of the original. Controls are much tighter than the pathetic C64 version and you'll soon be tearing through the streets like a pro. This is basically the closest you'll ever get to *Miami Vice* on your Spectrum, so rejoice.

AMSTRAD: Again, the Amstrad's sensation of speed makes this a much better prospect than the rubbish C64 conversion (what were they thinking?) and it's pretty much identical to the Spectrum outing. It also suffers none of the collision problems we sometimes noticed (only occasionally, mind you) with the Spectrum version.

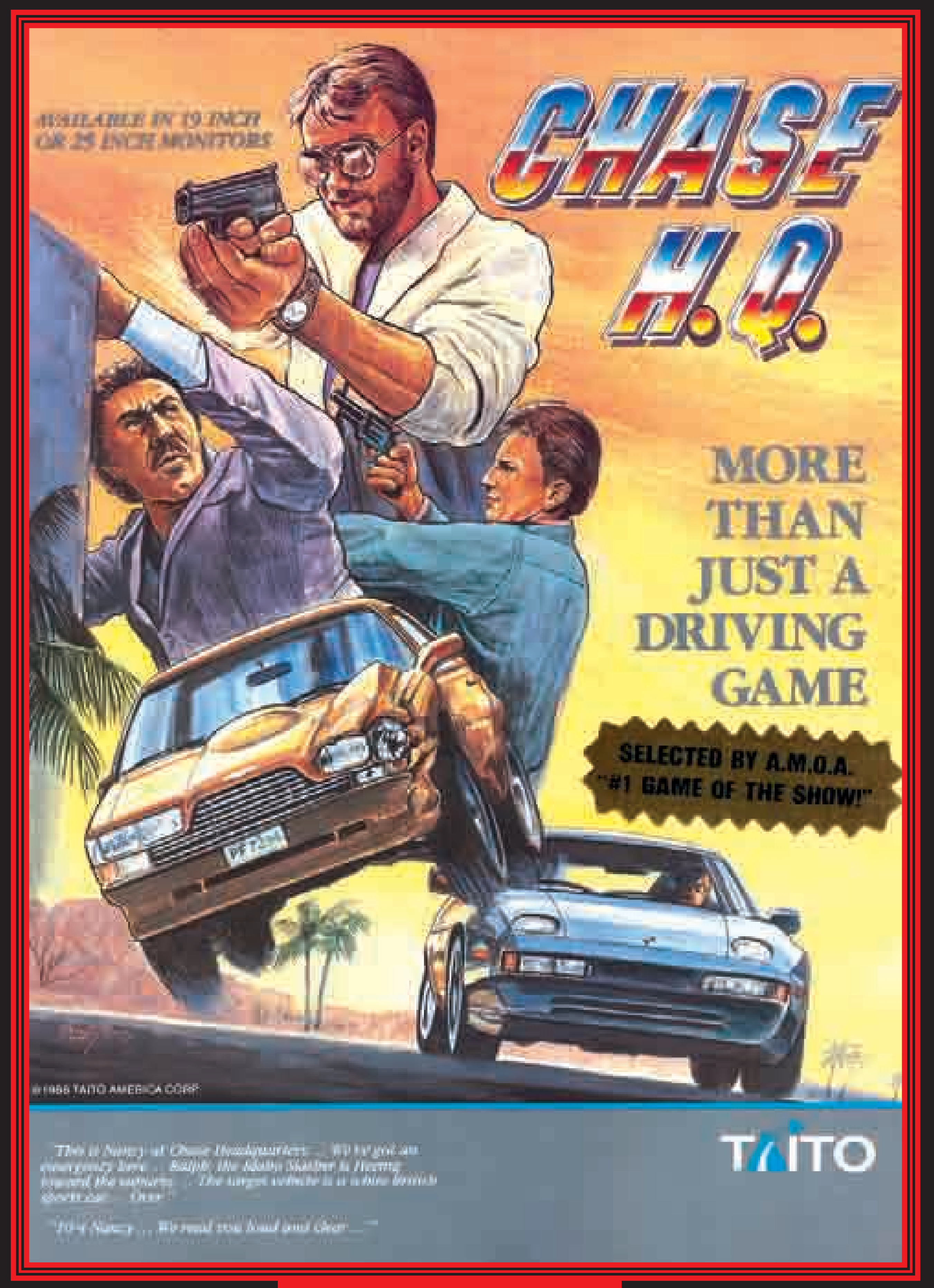
WINNER: AMSTRAD
RUNNER UP: SPECTRUM



Considering the limitations of the various home machines, it's amazing what Ocean managed with the Spectrum and Amstrad versions of *Chase HQ*. While it would have been impossible to catch the visceral thrill of the original game, both versions tried hard and ultimately succeeded. For us, though, the sheer amount of technical brilliance that has been crammed into the Spectrum release makes it the worthy winner.



▼ It's official – the Speccy has the best home version of *Chase HQ*. And don't argue.



CHASE HQ (Arcade) Taito, 1988 – Original arcade flyer

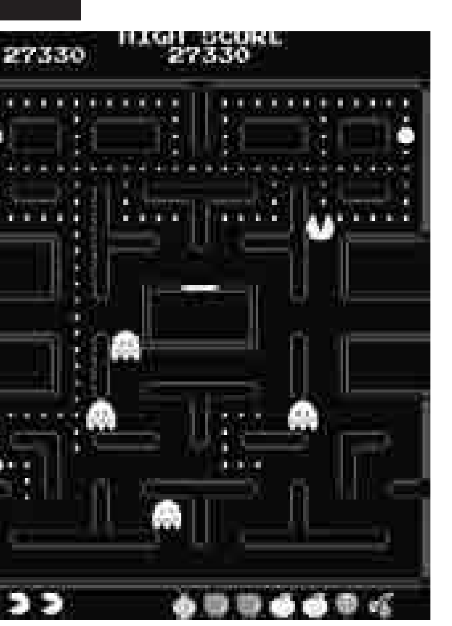
UNSUNG

As interest in retro gaming gathers momentum we thought it was high time that the unsung heroes who have worked so tirelessly to share their passion with others finally received some credit. This month we catch up with Keith Ainsworth, the man behind legendary retro fanzine Retrogamer…



First published in 1995, *Retrogamer* quickly became a bible for retro fans everywhere due to its painstaking attention to detail and an excellent sense of humour.

A total of 28 issues were printed in its six-year run, with creator Keith Ainsworth calling it a day in 2001. Fortunately, it's still possible to buy back issues of this excellent fanzine from Keith's website, http://retrogamer.merseyworld.com/, and you'll find them a fascinating read. Despite the fanzine's untimely demise, the site itself is regularly updated and also has a large selection of retro games for sale.



▼ Play enough *Pac-Man* and one day you too can have your own magazine. Sort of.

THE INTERVIEW

games™: When did you first get into gaming?

KA: I guess it was a Grandstand *Pong* that I was given for Christmas in the late Seventies. It had four different games – *Pong* (which was like tennis), *Hockey* (that was like tennis), *Football* (that was like tennis) and *Basketball* (which was like one-player tennis). After this I got heavily into *Space Invaders*, *Pac-Man* and all those early Eighties coin-ops. From there I got an Atari VCS 2600 and later a Spectrum.

g™: How difficult was it to set up *Retrogamer*?

KA: I just had the idea that I'd like to start a mag that like-minded people could read; a point of focus for other classic gamers. The professional gaming press had run the odd article about old games but they always seemed to get the facts wrong; one I remember said *JetPac* came out in 1981 – the year before the Spectrum even existed. The hardest thing about setting up *Retrogamer* fanzine for me was the technical end. I'd never done any DTP, although I'd fiddled with some graphics programs. The first issue was done on an Amiga 500, with software that was free on the cover of a magazine.

g™: What were the best and worst moments about working on *Retrogamer*?

KA: Getting the first magazine reviews was quite something. I'd sent the first issue to *Super Play* and *Nintendo Magazine System* as they both covered fanzines. They both seemed to really like it and gave *Retrogamer* a great write-up. This really started the ball rolling with readers. The worst experience was a hard drive crash that lost me a couple of weeks' work.

g™: How did the feature on *Manic Miner* creator Matthew Smith come about?

KA: *Manic Miner* was the first game I ever loaded into my Spectrum and it just blew me away. Even today *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy* are brilliant games. Great puzzles, great response from the controls – perfectly balanced games. That, together with the mystery of what happened to Matthew Smith, made him the perfect cover story for *Retrogamer* issue 2. This July I had the pleasure of meeting Matthew in person at the CGEUK show, getting my *Manic Miner* cover signed and posing for a silly picture with him.

g™: Anything you never covered that you wish you did?

KA: I'm very happy with all 28 issues. I covered every area that interested me. I tracked down some old coders like Malcolm Evans who seemed very surprised anyone was still interested. I tried to make it informative and give the complete story of anyone I covered. In addition, I'd throw in the odd bit of humour to stop it getting too dry.

▲ Keith Ainsworth: Entitled to grin like a loon – he invented *Retrogamer* magazine.

g™: How much of the fanzine did you write yourself?

KA: I wrote the first three issues but gradually readers sent in contributions. I was lucky to get in touch with some really knowledgeable people who really rounded out the content. You need to be prepared to do a great deal of work to make a fanzine work. You

▼ An interview with *Manic Miner*'s enigmatic creator, Matthew Smith, is a *Retrogamer* highlight.



need to love your subject. In the end I probably wrote half of the copy.

g™: What do you think about many publishers' lack of archiving?

KA: I've always enjoyed the research, especially speaking to the people involved. Back in 1994 I found some great archives at the local university. These were microfilm copies of American and British newspapers. With the indexes I was able to follow the development of the gaming industry through the papers.

Once my readership grew, and especially when I got my web page up in 1996, people would contact me. A reader might know someone who worked on games back in the day and pass along his contact details. Companies are terrible at storing their history. The Ocean cover artist Bob Wakelin had to rescue a large amount of his original paintings from a skip in the late Nineties – they'd been put there to be disposed of and he rescued them in the nick of time. I bought some of these and they are currently on the walls of an art gallery in Liverpool. I guess it's up to the fans to preserve this stuff.

g™: How do you feel about the current interest in retro gaming and the way magazines are representing it?

KA: I'm happy the way it's going. I'm not one of these collectors who needs to be elitist and say it was more fun when there were only five of us. I started *Retrogamer* as a focus for other gamers, to bring us together. Professional magazines like **games™** can do this to a level that a fanzine never could.

g™: What was the reason for stopping *Retrogamer*?

KA: I'd covered all the main systems in detail, spoken to several industry figures and covered all the games I loved. When I started there was hardly any UK presence on the web and no place for UK collectors and gamers to come together. The internet meant I could carry on by adding new articles to my web page. I'd achieved a lot more than I ever thought possible. I was featured in loads of magazines, appeared on television twice, featured in an obscure Italian TV documentary about Matthew Smith and wrote my own page in *CVG* (Keith Ainsworth's Retro Ranch) for a year. But all the back issues are still available and make a great reference for classic gaming info.

g™: What are your plans now?

KA: My collection has reached the level were I've got pretty much everything I want. I'm happy to add new articles to my web page every so often which keeps my hand in. I also enjoy retro conventions and hope they keep growing.



VECTREX



IT'S AN OLDIE, AN ODDITY, BUT DEFINITELY A GOODY

A thing of beauty is a joy forever. Don't believe us? Then take a look at General Consumer Electronics's Vectrex and all should become clear. Even though it's now over 20 years old, its unique look and sleek styling means that there's nothing else like it in the world of videogames. It remains the only portable (if that's the word for something weighing around 15 pounds) vector-based console in existence and has developed an incredibly loyal fan base and a bustling homebrew scene. Not bad for a machine that had a shelf life of just over two years, boasted very few commercial games and was released at the time of the early Eighties videogame crash…

One of the biggest problems with GCE's Vectrex is that so many myths surround it and it's become hard to separate fact from fiction. For instance, claims that GCE's president, Ed Krakauer, acquired a stash of five-inch monitors after being approached by an un-named Asian businessman and then instructed his staff to build a console

THE NAME'S DONDZILA, JOHN DONDZILA

Fans of the Vectrex's homebrew scene will already be familiar with John Dondzila. Although he's created several variations of classic arcade titles like *Vector Vaders* and *Rockaroids*, he's best known for *Vecmania* – the world's first 64K Vectrex cartridge, released in 1999. *Vecmania* used menu-driven, bank-switched hardware to increase the traditional 32K of standard Vectrex carts. It included three brand new titles (*Star Fire Spirits*, *Repulse* and *Birds Of Prey*); remixes of *Vector Vaders*, *Patriots* and *Rockaroids;* and *Discs Of Tron* and *Tempest* demos that Dondzila was working on. The entire package can be picked up for a miserly $20 and is available from www.classicgamecreations.com.

around the screens have been dismissed. What we do know for sure, however, is that the Vectrex began life as a machine called the Mini Arcade.

The concept of the Mini Arcade was created by Jay Smith, president of Smith Engineering and Western Technology, in the early Eighties and was quickly touted around to prospective buyers. Smith initially approached toy-manufacturer Kenner about the project, and although the company showed interest and was keen to push the Mini Arcade forward, it had a change of heart and cancelled its development plans. Fortunately for Smith, Krakauer immediately saw the potential in the Mini Arcade and quickly commissioned the firm to start work on the new project. By January 1982 the machine was nearly finished, but lacked one important asset – a selection of games to complement the machine's debut at the summer CES show.

Realising that time was of the essence, Western Technologies began recruiting staff and told them that 12 games needed to be ready for the CES unveiling. In the meantime, GCE decided to think up a new name for its nearly finished product. Various ideas were bandied about and included the likes of Vector-X and HP-3000, but GCE eventually settled on Vectrex. With the name decided and several titles like *Scramble*, *Mine Storm*, *Star Trek* and *Berzerk* already completed, GCE prepared for a November launch.

Initially retailing for $199 (around £110) the Vectrex enjoyed steady sales, which were no doubt boosted by the fact that the machine had its own built-in monitor so a separate television wasn't necessary. Yet despite the machine's early success, GCE was looking to be bought out and was more than happy when it was acquired by board-game manufacturer Milton Bradley (MB) in the spring of 1983.

Although the Vectrex only sported a black and white display, MB was keen to explore the possibilities of developing a colour version of its new machine. Colour overlays were supplied with each game (both to liven up the display and mask the monitor's brightness) but MB still pushed for a colour monitor. Unfortunately, despite looking at several designs, it soon became obvious to MB that a colour Vectrex would be too expensive for consumers and the project was quickly shelved.

WHY I LOVE MY VECTREX

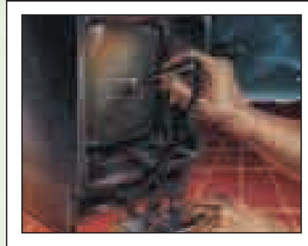
Few consoles have caught my eye like the Vectrex. From the moment I saw its compact screen playing the amazing *Mine Storm*, I was transfixed and knew that I had to own one. After what seemed like a million washed cars, I earned enough money for my own machine and I finally had my coveted prize. Sadly, my Vectrex is no longer with me, as it died of natural causes a few years back. One day (cash permitting), I'll pick up another machine and relive many happy Sunday afternoons – until then, I'll be content with my memories.

WILL JOHNSTON

With Milton Bradley distributing the machine throughout Europe and negotiating a deal with Bandai to distribute the machine in Japan, Vectrex's future seemed assured. Unfortunately, the early Eighties videogame slump was in full effect by this time and Milton Bradley soon shut down GCE and began selling the Vectrex off at ridiculously low prices in order to shift its huge stockpiles. By the end of 1984, the Vectrex was dead and GCE's dreams had died with it (although it did try to resurrect a handheld version in 1988). MB was reported to have lost a staggering $31.6 million in sales, while the Vectrex became yet another casualty of the crash that claimed so many other consoles.

Fortunately, the Vectrex does live on and even now supports a thriving homebrew scene that's a testament to the machine's enduring popularity. All the Vectrex rights were returned to Smith Engineering, providing it makes no profit from Vectrex sales, and the company has given its blessing to the distribution of cartridge-ROMS, manuals and overlays, and even the most cursory of glances on the internet will find you plenty of new Vectrex games or uncompleted projects that are still being worked on.

It may have been conceived at one of the worst possible times in videogame history, but to us the Vectrex remains one of the most desirable machines money can buy and is a classic machine in every sense of the word.

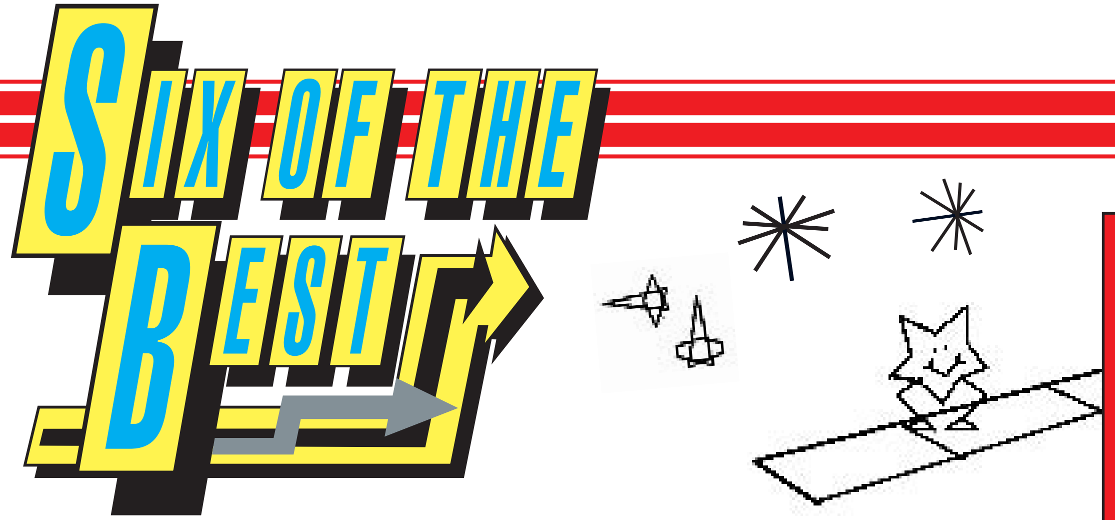


COOL EXTRAS

The Vectrex still stands up on the aesthetics front and is a gorgeously designed machine that would feature proudly in any gamer's collection. One of the coolest aspects of it is the built-in control pad. Featuring four separate buttons and an analogue joystick, it helped to recreate the feel of the arcades and proved to be surprisingly robust. Other additions to the Vectrex peripheral range included a Lightpen and the funky 3D Imager. Unfortunately, both items are now extremely hard to track down and can cost several hundred pounds. The fact that neither item had many games that supported them explains why their appeal is limited.



▲ The Vectrex had so few games that's it's possible to get the whole lot. Expensive, but possible…

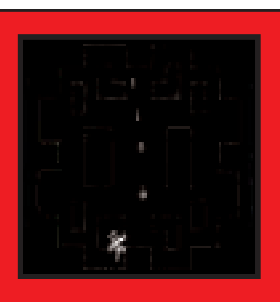


Six of the Best

DON'T BE FOOLED BY THE VISUALS – THE VECTREX HAD SOME CRACKING GAMES, MANY OF WHICH STILL STAND UP WELL TODAY. HERE'S A SELECTION OF SOME OF OUR FAVOURITES…

Armour Attack

Best described as a 2D version of *Battlezone, Armour Attack* sees you control a jeep as you destroy enemies. Each level has some well thought-out mazes and delivers real cat-and-mouse action. Although enemy tanks can be stopped with just one shot, they can still return fire, so it's best to finish them off as quickly as possible. Controls are slick and the game still plays like a dream, although later levels get pretty hard. Whilst the sound is basic, the sharp visuals still impress, with special mention going to the hard-to-shoot helicopter that spins out of control when hit.



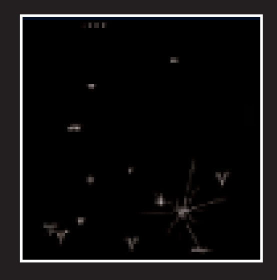
Fortress Of Narzod

The Vectrex has some superb early shooters and *Fortress Of Narzod* is no exception. Featuring some fantastic visuals and neat scaling effects, the game has you negotiating deep chasms and trying to destroy as many enemies as possible. Cliff sides can be used to ricochet shoots towards your opponents, but care must be taken to ensure that you don't get caught in the crossfire. Some of the collision detection is a bit suspect and you can sometimes get destroyed by a hidden enemy, but *Fortress Of Narzod* is essential stuff and easily worth the £20-£50 for which it often sells.

Space Wars

The game that started it all hits the Vectrex in all its glory. This might look simplistic, but the gameplay is as faithful as ever and works extremely well on the Vectrex. Take control of your ship and blast your opponent before he does the same to you. The wrap-around screen allows you to get the drop on your enemy and your craft looks similar to *Star Trek's* USS Enterprise (although that could be just us). While enjoyable as a single-player game, *Space Wars* really comes into its own with the addition of a second player. A perfect example of how the simplest concepts are often the best.





Mine Storm

Never mind that *Mine Storm* was built into the Vectrex – it was superb and one of the best adaptations of *Asteroids* we've ever played. The idea was for you to blast your way to safety through a packed minefield. Like *Asteroids*, movement is controlled by your ship's thrust and great skill is needed to ensure success. The crisp visuals still look great and the hectic gameplay will have you on a knife-edge. Sadly, a bug in the original game meant you were unable to get past Level 13. Our advice is to find a copy of *Mine Storm II*, which was sent to gamers who complained about the bug.

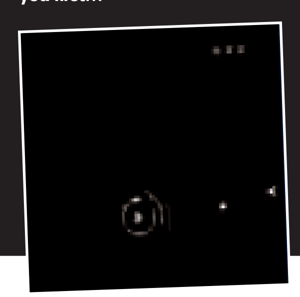


Bedlam

While conceptually simple, *Bedlam* oozes playability and will instantly find friends with those gamers who love the likes of *Tempest*. You take control of a spacecraft that's contained within a star-shaped vector; by rotating your ship in all directions (you can't actually move), you must take out the approaching enemies before they make contact with you. You're supplied with a smart bomb for tight situations, but the frantic action ensures that you'll find yourself full of regret as soon as its been fired. As the levels progress the vectors start to shrink (although you can rectify this by shooting at them) and even spin, meaning a steady hand and keen eye is needed to reach those high scores.

Star Castle

Although not a fantastic arcade port, *Star Castle* is still great fun and makes for a gripping shooter. The aim of the game is to destroy the spacecraft that's made its home in the middle of three rotating walls; sadly, he's quite happy to remain in his snug base and you need to destroy his defences with your laser. As his base disintegrates, you have to avoid the debris that's aimed back at you, as well as having to dodge laser shots from your opponent. *Star Castle* is easily one of the hardest games available for the Vectrex and its price can often exceed £60, but if you're up for a challenge you won't be disappointed. Just don't say that we didn't warn you first…





VECTREX ARCADE SYSTEM (GCE) 1982 – US Advertisement









We take a journey back to school to see if we're still a good shot with a catapult...

Format: Spectrum, C64
Release: 1985
Publisher: Microsphere
Developer: Dave Reidy

One of the great things about senior school was that we started just as corporal punishment was abolished. There were no worries about getting our arses caned for speaking in assembly and the once feared ruler now become a simple instrument for drawing straight lines rather than a teacher's weapon.

Spare a thought, then, for poor little Eric – *Skool Daze*'s average underachieving troublemaker whose report card was far from satisfactory. Fearing his headmaster's wrath, Eric (or whatever other name you wished to give him and the rest of the cast) had to find a way to open the staff-room safe and steal the card before the head of year was able to read it. Getting into the safe, however, was far from easy, as each teacher knew only one letter of the combination – a surprisingly twisted method of security, considering this was a school we were dealing with.

To get past this problem, you had to find 15 shields dotted around the impressively detailed school; once you'd managed to knock each shield and make it flash, you could disorientate the teachers and then knock them down to reveal their letters (although the history teacher needed a little more persuading).

Sadly, actually hitting the shields was not as easy as it first appeared, and while some could be quite easily reached, others required a little more ingenuity. When a shield was just out of reach, quickly hitting a classmate or attacking him with your trusty catapult would knock him to the floor for a limited time. Providing you were quick enough, you could then leap onto his back in order to hit the frustratingly out-of-reach item.

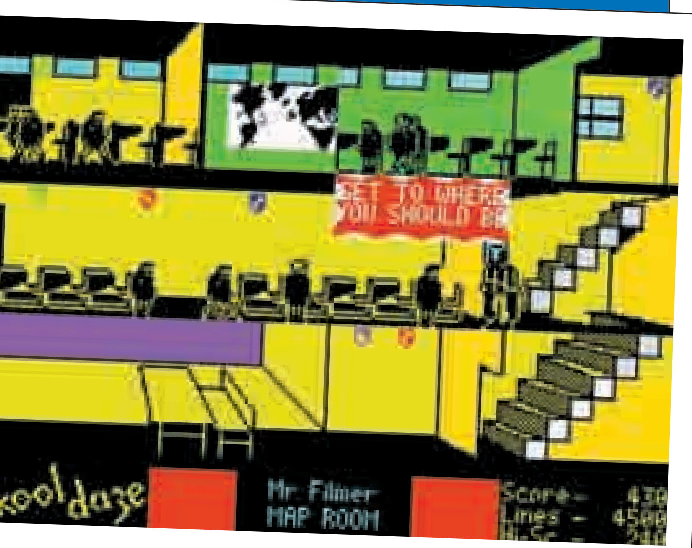
No matter how athletic Eric was, though, a few shields still remained annoyingly out of his grasp. Your only option here was to fire at them from the school's stairways, or bounce a pellet off a teacher's head



MEET THE KLASS OF 99

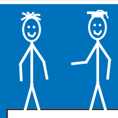
Retro development cartel Retrospec continues to gain prominence as a talented group of coders who remake old 8-bit classics, but it was Richard Jordan's reworking of *Skool Daze* that really put it on the map. Featuring superb cartoony visuals that perfectly captured the original Spectrum release, *Klass Of 99* received massive acclaim from all who played it and really helped to set Retrospec apart from its peers.

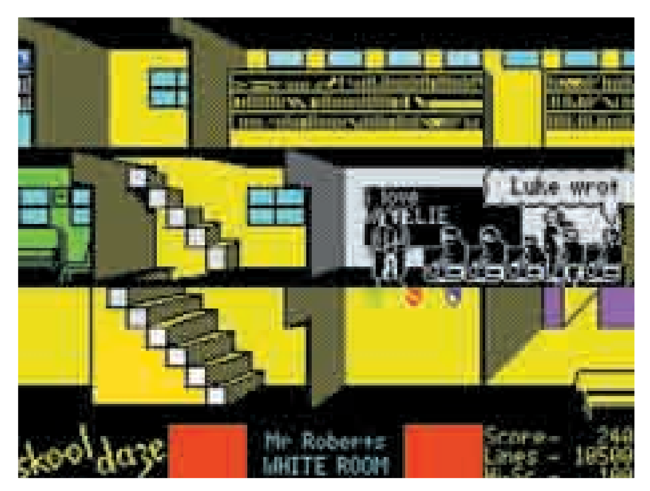
Jordan did take a few liberties by adding more rooms and changing a few details of the plot, but all in all *Klass Of 99* was a superb remake and a testament to Jordan's hard work on what was obviously a real labour of love.





▼ Of course, if they made *Skool Daze* now you'd just have spell your name right to get an A. Tsk. Standards.





and hope that the ricocheted shot would hit its target.

While *Skool Daze*'s goal sounded simple, the sheer amount of interaction that went on within the school made your task much harder than it appeared. Rival classmates would hit you or fire catapults at you, and snitch to the teachers whenever they got the chance… and then there were the teachers themselves. If you were caught in an out-of-bounds area or had been spotted misbehaving, you'd instantly be handed some lines; get over 10,000 and it was suspension until they were all completed. Needless to say, much care had to be taken around the masters and the fact that you still had to make your way to lessons while you were trying to complete your goal didn't make things easier.

It was this living, breathing atmosphere that made *Skool Daze* so much fun and it's still astonishing to play today. Pupils mill around and jostle each other as they make their way to their next lesson, teachers can be spotted having conversations in the staff room, and there are even numerous short missions to complete whenever lessons had finished. Granted, they were often simple affairs that required you to simply recover a peashooter or reach a certain destination before someone else, but their inclusion was still greatly appreciated and added a layer of realism that was missing from other Spectrum titles of the time.

Despite being only three screens wide, the school's layout was nicely implemented and it meant that plenty of exploration was needed in order to find all the shields and complete your many tasks. Visuals throughout *Skool Daze* had a great cartoony feel to them, and while they still hold a certain charm they no longer really impress as much as they did in 1985. While it's quite hard to make yourself out from your other classmates, the teachers are as distinctive as ever and a simple glance is all that's needed to work out who's who.

Sound, on the other hand, is a bit of a disappointment, and apart from a cheerful rendition of 'Boys And Girls Come Out To Play', the majority of other effects are simple beeps that add little to the atmosphere.

THE RULES OF SKOOL

BOYS SHALL ATTEND LESSONS AS SHOWN IN THE TIMETABLE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SCREEN

BOYS DO NOT SCORE POINTS BY ATTENDING LESSONS, BUT MAY BE GIVEN LINES IF CAUGHT IN THE WRONG PLACE

BOYS WHO ACQUIRE OVER 10,000 LINES SHALL BE EXPELLED IMMEDIATELY FROM THE SCHOOL

BOYS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO ENTER THE STAFF ROOM OR THE HEADMASTER'S STUDY. TAKE CARE!

AT PLAYTIME, BOYS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE PLAYING AND NOT IN ANY OF THE CLASSROOMS

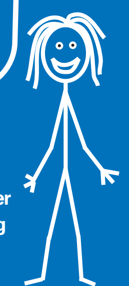
BOYS SHALL NOT HIT THEIR SCHOOLMATES

BOYS SHALL NOT FIRE CATAPULTS

BOYS ARE EXPECTED TO WALK QUIETLY IN THE CORRIDORS – THEY ARE NOT FOR RUNNING OR SITTING IN

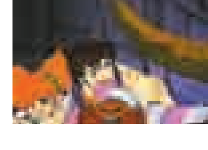
SCHOOL DINNERS ARE COMPULSORY

BOYS WILL BE NEAT AND POLITE AT ALL TIMES



Even though its aesthetics have aged, there's no denying that *Skool Daze*'s gameplay is as enjoyable as ever. Whether you're writing rude words on the school's many blackboards, or tricking the school swot or bully into receiving lines, *Skool Daze* feels as fresh and fun now as the day it was released – a fine achievement when you consider its age. And much better than going back to real school…

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF 1987



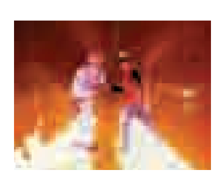
CARTOON HEROES: *Jayce And The Wheeled Warriors* saw the young Jayce trying to track down his father in order to defeat the evil Saw Boss. It wasn't as cool as *Mask*, but was still entertaining.

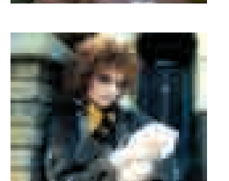
FASHION VICTIM: Fingerless gloves were all the rage in 1985 and became popular with the fairer sex, even though they subsequently all looked like they worked on greengrocers' stalls.



ON THE RADIO: Sadly, the only time we hear Kate's beautiful voice is when our editor plays one of his awful mix tapes. Luckily, concentrating hard allows us to recall the glory of the *Hounds Of Love* album.

AT THE MOVIES: Fresh-faced Michael J Fox was the time-travelling Marty McFly in *Back To The Future* and became a huge star. We might deny it now, but we all wanted one of those DeLoreans.





ON THE BOX: Still going strong after 19 years, *EastEnders* is as popular as ever. Sadly, many of the original cast have long since left the show, so here's a picture of Mary to get you all misty eyed…

MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES 2

Late last year, Midway provided gamers with one of the best retro collections for ages. Featuring classic hits like Defender, Joust, SpyHunter, Gauntlet and Robotron 2084, as well as the ability to log scores on Xbox Live, it became an immediate hit with retro gamers everywhere. But can the sequel achieve the same success?

Format: **Xbox, PlayStation2**
Price: **£14.99**
Publisher: **Midway**
Developer: **In-House**

History shows that in business, success is all about acquisitions and takeovers. Take the bumpy past of Midway Games, for instance. Originally known as Midway Manufacturing, the company started life performing the simple task of building amusement equipment for various arcades.

Before long, Midway was bought out by Bally and began producing coin-operated electromechanical arcade games. By the mid-Seventies, Midway had joined forces with Taito and gained the rights to license and distribute *Space Invaders*. As we all know, it became an instant hit.

Buoyed by this early success, Midway continued its relationship with Japanese manufacturers and was soon releasing the likes of *Pac-Man*, *Burger Time* and many others to great acclaim.

By 1988, Williams acquired the Midway division of Bally and then purchased Time-Warner Interactive eight years later. Time-Warner already held the rights to Atari Games, so when Atari Games was renamed as Midway in 1999 and Williams' pinball division was eventually closed down, it not only became the surviving legacy of Williams/Midway and Atari Games, but also provided Midway with an extremely diverse and rich legacy.

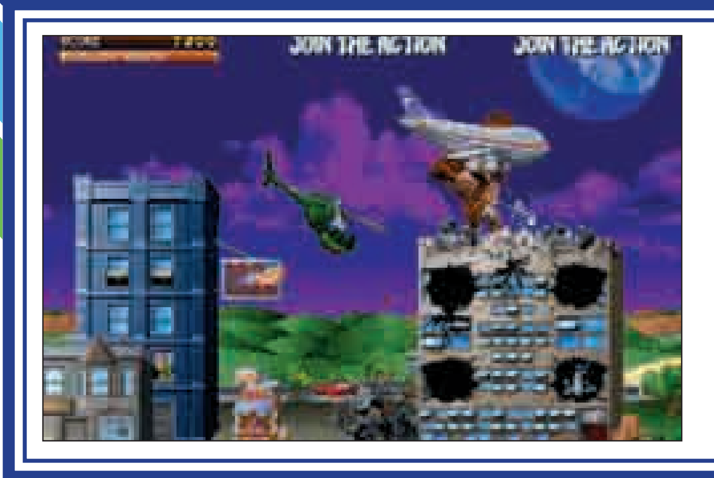


▲ Many of the best Midway titles appeared on the first *Arcade Treasures* compilation, but there are still plenty of old favourites on this second instalment.

Not surprisingly, the majority of these classics were featured in last year's *Midway Arcade Treasures*, which also contained interesting (but sparse) information about many of the games. With such a massive history of games to draw upon, it was perhaps inevitable that a sequel would appear, and while it doesn't have as many hits as the first compilation, there's still enough here to justify the £15 price tag.

THE TREASURES

In no particular order, here's a selection of some of the classic (and not so classic) games that we just can't stop playing…



RAMPAGE WORLD TOUR

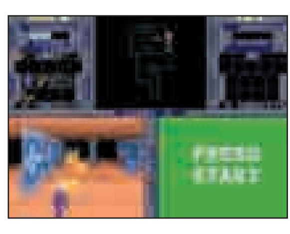
Although *Rampage* was quite popular in the arcades, we found it very dull and didn't enjoy being confined to just one screen. Luckily, *Rampage World Tour* seriously ups the ante and gives you scrolling levels filled with all manner of objects that need destroying. The default button layout is a bit clunky (use the Y button to jump, for instance) but once this has been altered you'll find yourself having a superb time.

The visuals are suitably cartoony and the game has been filled with plenty of humorous animations – we particularly like seeing humans getting eaten like peanuts. It's definitely one of the more repetitive titles on the compilation, but the addition of the three-player mode and numerous score bonuses at the end of each stage does help to extend its longevity. Sadly, the ability to use infinite credits ruins both the game and the Xbox Live high-score tables.

XYBOTS

Xybots is one of the quirkiest titles on the compilation, but it's proved to be one of our favourites. The visuals are rather basic and we've seen much better animation in other titles, but there's something quite endearing about teaming up with a mate and storming your way through the game's many mazes. The music and spot effects won't be winning any awards, but they do seem to complement the garish visuals and sedate pacing of the game.

Xybot's rather complex control system from the arcade has been translated very well and, once mastered, will allow you to zip through each stage in record time. While we found the early levels rather easy, the action soon heats up, and if you're using the game's many warps, it becomes very hard, very quickly.



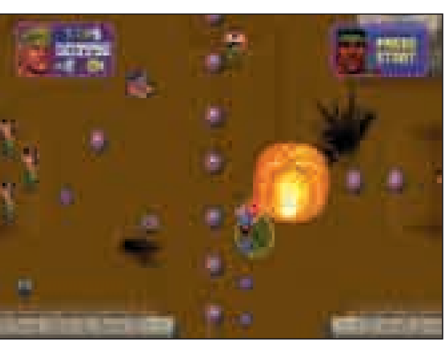




TOTAL CARNAGE

Although technically the sequel to *Smash TV*, *Total Carnage* is different enough to create a game that excites and infuriates in equal measures. Ditching the game-show setting of the original game, Midway took the action outside and cranked up the enemies to insane levels. *Total Carnage* is superb fun and plays as well as ever – the controls on the dual analogues are nice and responsive, and the trigger buttons make it extremely easy to lay bombs.

Be warned, though – this is an extremely tough game and you'll soon feel overwhelmed by the sheer amount of enemies that are constantly thrown at you. And don't even get us started on the last boss… Fortunately, we're more than up for the challenge and the gory, outrageous visuals and insane sound effects make *Total Carnage* feel as fresh as ever. If only it didn't have unlimited continues.



NARC

It might have caused controversy when it was first released, but there's no denying that *NARC* is still great fun. You and a friend play two drug-squad cops who are out to bust as many bad guys as possible. Controls are tight and the detailed visuals contain an amazing amount of gore. You'll get more points if you actually cuff and bust the enemies, but it's a lot more fun to simply blast the hell out of them.

Like many of the titles on this compilation, it's extremely simple to play, but the amount of enemies and a great two-player mode means that you'll be having too much fun to care. The driving levels are rather cumbersome, but this is easily one of the most impressive titles on display. Just remember, kids – winners don't do drugs.



▲ You want proof that drugs mess you up? Check this guy out – totally messed up. And he probably didn't even *do* drugs…

MORTAL KOMBAT II

As much as we enjoyed playing *Mortal Kombat II* again, it's easy to see that it's not a patch on *Street Fighter II*. Sure, it's got some decent digitised characters and there's even more blood than in the first *Mortal Kombat* title (which, strangely, you'll no longer find on this compilation), but it's just not as good as Capcom's classic.

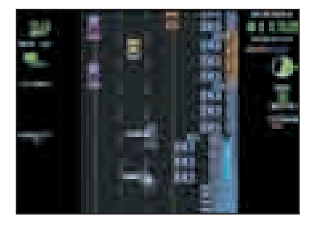
It takes a while to get used to the controls (2D fighters don't need a block button) but once you've got the hang of pulling off Fatalities and special moves, the game becomes great fun. In fact, we prefer *Mortal Kombat II* to its sequel (which has also been included on the disc). It's definitely the best example of the series in 2D and it still provides plenty of laughs if you're playing with a mate. It's just a good job that remembering how to pull off those Babalities only requires a quick search on the internet…



APB

APB's unique blend of exploration and multiple tasks made it an instant hit in the arcades and we're pleased to say that it's still great fun now. Like *Championship Sprint* it suffers from some rather twitchy controls (we actually prefer using the D-pad), but once these are overcome you'll find busting perps and beating confessions out of suspects as good as ever.

One of the most interesting things about *APB* is how well it draws you into the game and constantly adds more tasks without seeming overwhelming. The gameplay is superbly pitched and you never feel like you've been given too much to do. The visuals are nice and cartoony and, while they're a little small, they're packed with humour and are well detailed. This is one title we'd definitely like to see updated. Hell, it could even work in 3D…





▲ Ooh, look – cars, exploration, multiple tasks… it's like *GTA*. Except not.





GAUNTLET II

One of the first things you notice about *Gauntlet II* is how badly it's aged. The tiny characters suffer from poor animation and become extremely hard to follow when the action heats up. Fortunately, the hectic gameplay is as good as ever and this is still one of the best four-player retro experiences you can have. Playing 'It' with each other is still as much fun as the first time, and the competitive gameplay will soon create a, er, lively playing atmosphere.

As much as we've enjoyed playing *Gauntlet II* again, the infinite credits really leave us in a quandrary. If you don't use them, you'll enjoy a classic that features loads of new gameplay elements; if you do use them, *Gauntlet II*'s lack of depth is revealed and it becomes extremely boring all too soon.

CHAMPIONSHIP SPRINT

The most surprising thing about *Championship Sprint* is that Midway hasn't been able to faithfully re-create the steering wheel from the original game. As a result, your car is extremely twitchy to control and it takes a good while to master the sensitive controls and earn some decent lap times. Visuals and sound are incredibly basic and now look very dated, but the gameplay shines through as brightly as it did in 1986.

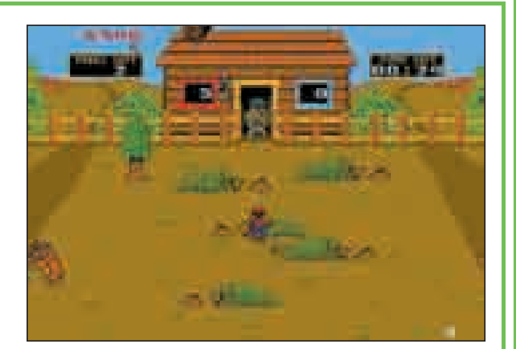
Championship Sprint may be very simplistic to play, but this actually works in its favour. With just three things to worry about – left, right and accelerate – you can just get down to some serious racing. The loss of the third player is a bit of a pain, but this is yet another satisfying game to play with a mate.

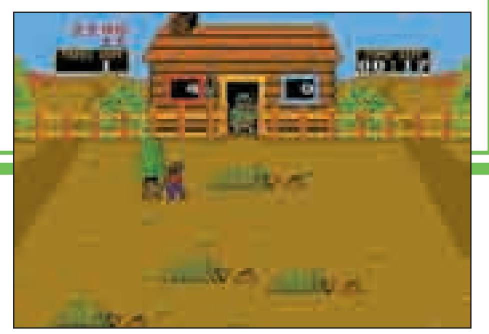


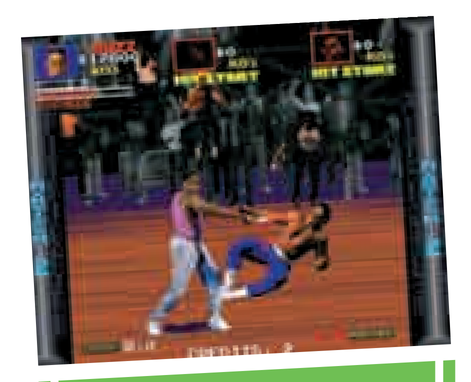
TIMBER

First released in 1984, *Timber* is another game that looks dull but quickly grabs you and refuses to let you go. Taking the role of a lumberjack, the aim is to cut down a certain amount of trees in a time limit. It's certainly good fun as a single-player experience, but *Timber* really comes to life with the addition of a second player. Gameplay gets extremely competitive, as you can work together as a team or use falling trees to temporarily trap your opponent while you up your own score.

Later levels become incredibly frantic and you soon forget the simplistic visuals and annoying music and just concentrate on causing as much grief to your opponent as possible. The lack of eight-way movement is a touch annoying, as it makes the game feel clunk,. but once you get over this niggle it's easily one of the best multiplayer titles on the disc.







▲ Hahahaa! Oh dear, hahaha – look at that. *Pit Fighter*, eh? Rubbish.

AVOID LIKE THE PLAGUE

Every compilation has its fair share of duffers and *Midway Arcade Treasures 2* is no exception, but by far the worst offenders are *Pit Fighter* and *Primal Rage*.

Both titles suffer from practically non-existent gameplay (especially in the case of *Pit Fighter*), horrific visuals and some of the worst animation we've ever seen.

We never enjoyed playing these games the first time around and returning to them leaves a rather bitter taste in the mouth. Fortunately, the wheat far outweighs the chaff and we suppose you can't really complain about the odd title that's below par when you're only paying £15.

TO SUM UP...

The ratio of great games to slightly disappointing titles is nowhere near as impressive as the original *Midway Arcade Treasures*, but this is still a strong compilation that's well worth picking up. The sudden loss of *Mortal Kombat*, *Steel Talons* and *STUN Runner* is a little surprising (especially as they were believed to be part of the line-up until fairly recently) but there's always a chance that Midway is saving them for a future compilation.

Midway has once again included plenty of juicy nuggets of information here in the form of various video interviews and press kits, but it's neglected some of the more important titles in favour of games that don't share the same appeal.

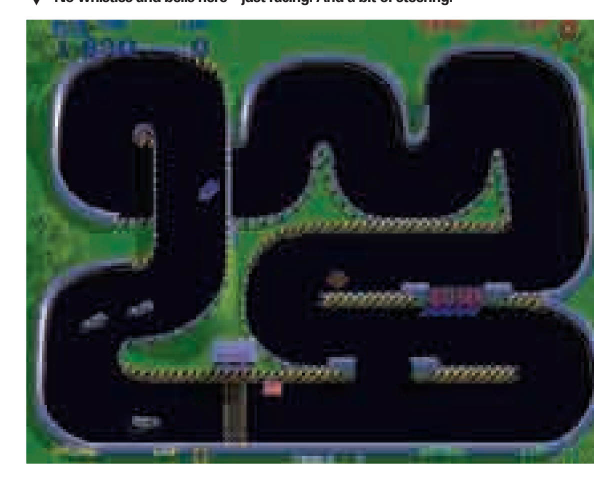
The biggest oversight, however, is the huge amount of games that have been given infinite credits. It's incredibly annoying and takes away a lot of the skill and sense of achievement from the high-score tables. Of course, simple willpower will overcome this but it's frustrating to see an unreachable score on Xbox Live because someone was prepared to play *Gauntlet II* for 10 hours and amass a ridiculous amount of points.

For all its faults, though, this is still well worth the asking price and should provide retro lovers with plenty of happy nostalgia and great gameplay. Hopefully, this second release from Midway will convince other publishers to follow suit and offer similar creations. And there's even talk of a third offering from Midway…

Score: 69%

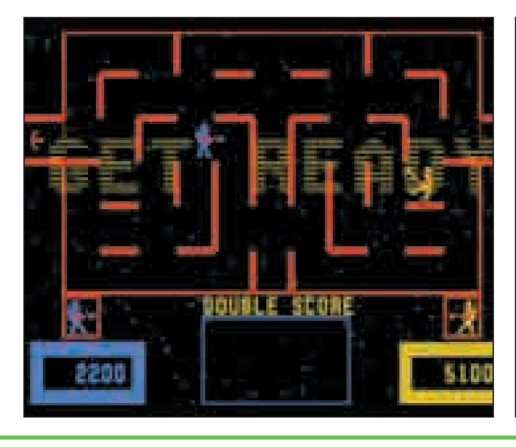


▼ No whistles and bells here – just racing. And a bit of steering.



THOSE GAMES IN FULL

APB, Arch Rivals, Championship Sprint, Cyber-Ball, Gauntlet II, Hard Drivin', Kosmic Kroozr, Mortal Kombat II, Mortal Kombat 3, NARC, Pit Fighter, Primal Rage, Rampage World Tour, SpyHunter 2, Timber, Total Carnage, Wizard Of Wor, Xenophobe, Xybots







DAVID BRABEN

interviewed by DARRAN JONES

Many people think space-trading classic Elite has never been bettered… including its author. Now, David Braben talks to games™ about futuristic exploration, Nuclear War and the problems facing today's games industry

What goes through your mind when you think of *Elite*? Do you picture intricate wireframe graphics that were cutting-edge when you first saw them in 1984, or does your mind stray back to a time when all that mattered was amassing a huge fortune and visiting as many planets as possible? Regardless of what memories *Elite* may stir in you, the game would have been impossible without the genius of David Braben and Ian Bell. Sadly, Bell is no longer in the industry, but Braben continues to push boundaries, define genres and make great games.

Born in 1964, Braben was first drawn to the computer itself and not the games you could play on it. "I was fascinated with the concept of the computer before I owned one and I desperately wanted my own, but they were horribly expensive," he laments. "I eventually got an Acorn Atom in the very early Eighties and from that day on I was the proverbial bedroom programmer, essentially writing games for my own amusement."

As well as writing his own programs, Braben turned his attention to commercially available titles – particularly in the early days of gaming.

"There were so few games out at the time – I remember getting an Acorn games pack for Christmas one year and they were all utter rubbish," he laughs. "So I thought, 'I could do better than that.' I'd already written my own version of *Space Invaders* but the first game I actually wrote was based on *Missile Command*. Although I really liked it in the arcades, I didn't think it was always obvious what was going on, so I wrote this game called *Nuclear War*." Having a serious lack of hardware at his disposal, Braben found himself defacing the family TV in order to create the visuals for his first masterpiece – the unpublished *Nuclear War*.

THIS TIME IT'S WAR

"I had a picture of the northern hemisphere in my game, which in those days was a very big achievement because the amount of screen memory was very small," he recalls. "I loaded from tape this picture I had drawn of the world on my television with a chinagraph pencil and followed this up by drawing in all the pixels. The idea of the game was that you played either Russia or America and you had to keep firing missiles across at each other in this big parabolic path in order to destroy the other guy's city – so you had missiles raining down towards you and you could send airbursts to blow up them up, and in the meantime you were also sending missiles over to the other guy – it was a two-player game – and that was great fun. The score was based on the number of deaths on the other side so it wasn't terribly politically correct, but that's how it all started."

Creating *Nuclear War* proved to be a rite of passage for Braben, as it allowed him to understand the intricacies of working in Assembler, which he still uses today. "*Nuclear War* had the outer loops written in Basic but I kept recoding sections of it in Assembler and it became a fantastic learning experience, because the Assembler ran so much faster than the basic code,"



IT ALL STARTS HERE

Elite blew gamers away with its unique wireframe visuals, sheer scope and unseen levels of freedom. Although you started off with just a hundred credits, your Cobra MkIII space craft soon opened up almost limitless possibilities to you.

Whether you lived out your Elite days as an honest trader or preferred the more swashbuckling (but dangerous) life of a pirate, the game always delivered. Every later edition of Elite came with countless new weapons, spacecraft or missions, so you'd often find avid fans with several copies of the game spread across various formats in their collection.

Perhaps the biggest achievement of Elite, though, was that the original game was coded to be contained within a measly 32K – a true achievement, especially when you realised that the original game contained over 280 trillion galaxies. That's a lot of space exploration…



he explains. "It meant that I could get something up and running very quickly, and from an understanding point of view it meant that I could free up the memory and use that for another picture in the game. It was a great trade-off and extremely useful, as the machine didn't have much memory."

Despite tinkering with other people's work, when creating his own titles Braben was never really influenced by other games, though the space-based antics of *Defender* (of which he was a fan) prompted him to embark on his own space odyssey. "As soon as I got the Assembler working, I spent most of my time playing around with 3D and 3D starfields, which I found extremely fascinating and quickly decided to make a game based on it," he recalls.

"I put together a selection of spaceships and had them flying around in a 3D starfield just at the point that I started university [Jesus College, Cambridge, where he read natural sciences] which was also when I met Ian Bell. I showed him what I'd been tinkering around with and we soon got talking about what else could be included in it. *Elite* essentially formed from that."

A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY…

Although playing around with 3D starfields proved to be Braben's main inspiration for *Elite*, a certain George Lucas sci-fi epic helped shape the game's future. "*Star Wars* had just come out and I just loved the idea of that sort of thing appearing in a game," Braben says.

"Although *Elite* is set in a much more bleak world to *Star Wars*, the concept of flying to completely different places was very attractive. From the point of view of actually creating the game, I already knew that I could render 3D starfields, whereas rendering landscapes was a whole different ball game. The idea of having a game where you have piracy and all that sort of thing, and you're getting attacked where there isn't a background to draw was a lot more attractive to me than having to draw a complicated landscape that you had to make

SOFTOGRAPHY



In over two decades in the industry, David Braben has been involved with a range of great games

Elite, Acornsoft, Various Formats 1984

Zarch, Acornsoft, Archimedes 1987

Virus, Firebird, Various Formats 1988

Frontier, Gametek, Various Formats 1993

First Encounters, Gametek, Various Formats 1995

Darxide, Sega/Frontier Developments, 32X 1996



▲ Virus was a significant step away from Braben's previous titles, although it still offered a huge amount of exploration for players – sadly, the PSone sequel was nowhere near as enjoyable.



DAVID BRABEN





Darxide EMP is a handheld remake of the original 32X version of *Darxide* – it's rather cool.

look believable."

Elite became a huge success and since its 1984 release on the BBC Micro it has appeared on nearly every format. For many, the NES incarnation has impressed the most, but the Commodore 64 version caused the most headaches. "We'd already addressed a lot of problems with the initial game after working on the C64 version," recalls Braben. "The problem with the Commodore 64 is that it's a lot slower than a BBC Micro and so… we spent of lot of the time making the C64 version run faster. When we moved *Elite* across to the NES we wrote a version on the C64 that rather than simply draw a line from A to B, would instead draw a line into user-defined characters and then allocate them across the screen in a way so that it would look the same. Once we had that in place, it was relatively easy to move it across to the NES."

Despite the relative ease of porting *Elite*, there was another obstacle to consider… "The other problem we had to deal with was the NES's lack of a keyboard, so we came up with the icon strip approach which was taken from *Frontier*, as that was already under development."

Frontier was the follow-up to *Elite* – with the original proving so popular, it was inevitable that a sequel would appear. What wasn't so clear was how long it would take to arrive.

"I was quite ambitious in what I wanted to do between *Elite* and *Frontier*," Braben explains. "After we completed all the different versions of *Elite*, though, we essentially became '*Elite*d out'. Although Ian and myself had already started a punitive sequel to *Elite*, it didn't actually go anywhere. Ian, I think, wasn't really motivated to work any more, so we split the tasks up but it eventually became just myself working on it. Writing a game for five years can be quite soul-destroying, but also when you start it things move on so much while you're writing it. *Frontier* was really cutting-edge when I first created the graphics in 1988 and they were amazing for the time, but by the time *Frontier* was released in 1993 texture mapping was not unusual. While it was still okay when it came out, *Frontier* wasn't as good as it could have been and that's when I resolved to start Frontier Developments."

THE FINAL FRONTIER?

Formed in 1994, Frontier Developments (of which Braben is now chairman) has developed a range of titles for nearly every platform, including the popular *RollerCoaster Tycoon* series. However, in the studio's early days, it found the problems encountered with *Frontier* were nothing compared to issues surrounding *First Encounters*, *Frontier*'s sequel.

"*First Encounters* was scheduled for release in 1995 with a company called Gametek, who I was extremely unhappy with," Braben explains. "It got to the stage where I even offered to buy back the rights and buy them out of their contract because I didn't want it to come out with them. They were trying to change so many things about the game; they were saying that they wanted it for DOS, when it had been written for

Thanks to publisher interference, *Frontier* turned out to be half the game it should have been. What a shame.



FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

Despite initially working with Ian Bell on a tentative sequel to Elite for the 8-bit machines, it soon became obvious to Braben that Bell no longer shared the same passion that he did. Bell later made various allegations against his development partner, including one that Braben had failed to pay an associate – claims that Braben was able to successfully disprove and they soon parted ways. Since then, the pair haven't been in touch with each other. "I've had no contact with him at all," reveals Braben. "I think he's become quite bitter. Quite why he's got out of the industry I don't know, but I've not seen him now for at least five years."

Windows. A lot of things changed at the last minute and they still wanted to stick to the release date. I tried to block the release by saying that they didn't have a version of the game to publish, but Gametek threatened to release the pre-betas. I ended up with two weeks to create a patch that fixed most of the problems. It's sad thinking about what happened. We worked frantically to produce that patch, but they released the game without it, and by the time it was eventually released there were even more bugs. It was the perfect example of development hell."

Although he's been stung in the past, Braben is convinced that there are still things about the industry to enjoy though, as with many gaming veterans, he's dismayed by the lack of originality in today's market. "I think it's a real shame that it's now very hard to do original games and to get them accepted," he says. "I don't think it's because people out there don't want them, I think it's often for marketing and commercial reasons – that's a big shame." Piracy is also a worry for Braben, and as a relatively small developer he feels the effects more than most. "Shops often tend to take big orders of things like sequels and so the game sells a lot more before piracy kills it off. Whereas games that publishers aren't prepared to take a big risk on see fewer copies being made in advance; piracy still comes in at the same time, with the result being that it has a much deeper effect on the sales of the game. We did a study in Germany on *Virus*, which was a very successful game but there were still 30 copies to every original released. Amazingly, we were blamed for making the game on one floppy, which in turn made it easier to pirate."

With Braben currently putting the finishing touches to *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3*, he now finally look forward to returning to the worlds of *Elite* in *Elite 4*. Despite a slew of similar titles being produced over the last 20 years, Braben is adamant that none of the games currently available are able to match the original's ambitions. "[Other developers] miss the point of *Elite*; they don't understand what made *Elite Elite*. In terms of how to move the game forward I think the important thing with *Elite* was the freedom that it gave you, and a lot of these other games just don't give you that. Games like *Privateer* tend to railroad the player a lot more and I think that constrains the way the game works. There have been plenty of games since *Elite* but they've never captured the spirit."

THE FOURTH DIMENSION

It's unclear if even Braben himself will manage to unleash the exact magical ingredients that made *Elite* so much fun to play, but with his attention now turned towards *Elite 4*, you can guarantee that he's going to try. "It's still a way off," confirms Braben, "but what's important to me is that it's going to be worth the wait. What I don't intend to do is another also-ran *Elite*-alike because there are enough of those around already."

SOFTOGRAPHY CONT.



- *V2000*, Grolier Interactive PC, PlayStation 1998
- *Infestation*, Ubisoft, Various Formats 2000
- *Wallace & Gromit In Project Zoo*, BAM! Entertainment, Various Formats, PlayStation2 2003
- *Darxide EMP*, Frontier Developments, Various Formats 2003
- *RollerCoaster Tycoon*, Atari, Xbox 2003
- *RollerCoaster Tycoon 2: Wacky Worlds*, Atari, PC 2003
- *Dog's Life*, SCEE, PlayStation2 2003
- *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3*, Atari, PC 2004



▲ If you'd have told David Braben ten years ago that he'd go from creating one of the greatest games of all time to making a game about Wallace and Gromit, he'd have probably called you a loon. Probably.

Retro Contact

Share your views about old-school gaming

First Contact
If you're into retro gaming and you've got something to share with the world, why not write to us at: games™ Retro, Highbury Entertainment, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 2JS Or you can email: gamestm@paragon.co.uk

EVERYTHING CHANGES?

Dear games™

I have a question which has been preying on my mind for a few years now: why is there such a difference in quality, and sometimes the entire gameplay, with certain games that appeared on both the Master System and the Mega Drive? This may sound obvious – 'the Mega Drive is more powerful' – but it was the Master System conversions that were far superior! Let me give you some examples (from my own experiences, of course):

• *The Terminator*: Much better music and gameplay on the Master System.
• *Bram Stoker's Dracula*: Blimey, the games are entirely different, and the more playable version is on the Master System.
• *Desert Strike*: I thought the graphics were clearer on the Master System.
• *California Games*: There's one less event in the Mega Drive version and the Master System version had speech while the Mega Drive version did not.

Is there an explanation for this? I know both systems had superb titles, but it seems something was lost in the conversion from one to another. What do you think? Does anyone know of any other examples?

Andrew Sale, Lincs

We can't say we agree with your *Desert Strike* comments, but the rest of your points are spot on. As for the reasons… well, they can come down to a variety of things. Sometimes titles are developed by separate developers and other times, mechanics are changed to suit the individual machine. A developer might not always have enough time to spend on a conversion, and other times it's simply down to laziness. If anyone has any similar examples then drop us a line at the usual address.

WE WANT MEGA MAN

Dear games™,

Once again Europeans are getting screwed over because of where they live. Why is Capcom not releasing the excellent looking *Mega Man Collection* that you covered in issue 23 in the UK?

Sure, he might not be that popular over here, but if Capcom was to release the game for around £20 I'm sure it would sell more than enough copies to justify its release. I wouldn't be surprised if people simply download the ROMs instead (I know I'm going to).

A Mega Man fan

■ We understand your annoyance about Mega Man not appearing in the UK, but piracy isn't the answer. While it's unlikely that the *Anniversary Collection* will appear over here for a while, we can always pray…

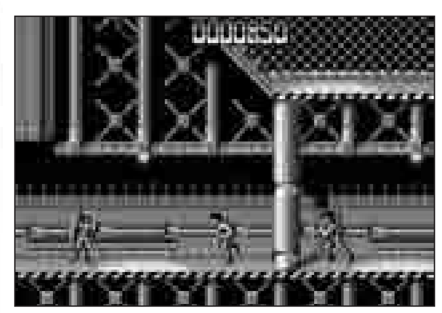


If everyone who believes in Mega Man claps their hands together, then maybe he'll magically appear.

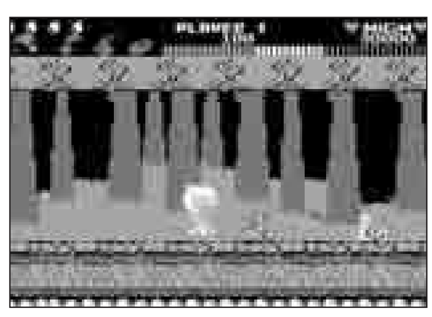
WONDROUS PLACE

Dear games™

After seeing your ace Retro feature on the PC Engine GT, I am now getting my teeth into *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* again and it seems very clear to me that the PC Engine version of this game is the closest home conversion of the arcade game. The Master System version was very good, as was the Amiga version, but the long loading times for the game just put me off playing it all the way through.



Was *The Terminator* better on the Master System than on the Mega Drive? Another philosophical teaser for all you thinkers.



Wonder Boy by name, wonderful by nature – or that's what most of you seem to think. Watch this space for more Wonder Boy action.

Anyway, to the point… please can you do a feature on the *Wonder Boy* games in a future issue? A version face-off page would be nice, or how about the story regarding Sega, Escape and Hudsonsoft? The re-release of *Adventure Island* that I'm playing at the moment on the GameCube is very close to the first *Wonder Boy* game – the feel of it more than anything else is absolutely bang on.

I was also playing *Adventure Island* on the NES last week and I was quite stunned as to how close this was to *Wonder Boy* too – even the background graphics are the same.

I G Maloney

You're not the first person to express an interest in a *Wonder Boy* feature, so it's definitely something we'll be looking at in a future issue. As for your comments on





STAR LETTER



OLD-SCHOOL RULES

Dear games™

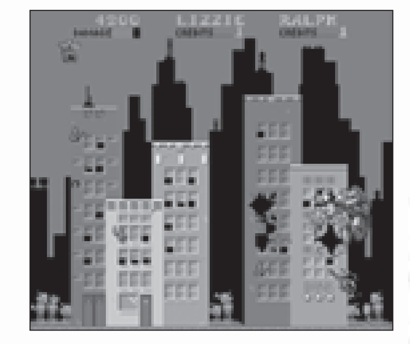
It was with great delight that I read your article 'Midway's Next Treasure Chest' (issue 22). By a stroke of good luck I found *Midway Arcade Treasures* in a bargain bin and paid less than £10 for it. I must admit that I had been unaware of its existence so was pleasantly surprised when I loaded it up.

What fun my granddaughter and I had playing the hilarious *Smash TV* – those bosses! – and the equally side-splitting *Rampage*. *Marble Madness* had us on the edge of our seats, as did *Paperboy*.

Why do we pay £40 to blow our brains apart with stats, power-ups, level-ups and the like when we can get so much joy from a five-minute quickie in the arcade?

We await the next volume with growing excitement, and might even forget all about the elusive *Fable*. Then again, maybe not…

Christina Towler, Wilts



We're glad you're having so much fun with *Midway Arcade Treasures*. While you raise a good point about new games, it's worth remembering that it's these stats and power-ups that make them appeal to the average gamer in the first place. Why not treat yourself to a new T-shirt while you wait for the new *Midway* compilation?

***Adventure Island* on the NES and GameCube – well, they're essentially the same game. Pick up a copy of issue 19 where we explained the comparisons in detail…**

AH, GO ON, GO ON…

Dear games™

After reading all about this *Street Fighter* beta game on the Mega Drive that may or may not have appeared in an episode of *Father Ted*, there has been one small but very significant detail that everyone, until now, has missed. While watching the episode, you'll notice that the words 'First Attack' appear on-screen. This instantly means that it cannot be the lost Mega Drive game. Why? Because these on-screen messages were not put into the *Street Fighter II* series until the release of *Super Street Fighter II* in 1993.

Remember, the game Brenton Borge is on about (issue 18) is *Champion Edition*, which was being made in 1992. This means that the game that's being played has to be a conversion of *Super Street Fighter II* for the Amiga or something, since it certainly doesn't look like the Mega Drive or SNES one.

I thought that I would dig into this subject a bit more and – gasp – I found another beta! And what's even better is that you can get it from PlanetEMU. Just take a look at my fan site for it and all will be made clear… www.angelfire.com/games5/sf2tb

Michael Walmsley, via email

And there we were thinking a letter from 'Mr *Father Ted*' Graham Linehan (issue 22) would have cleared all this up. Thanks for the new info, Michael, but things are getting so complicated that the only people who can probably help are at Capcom. We'll see if we can track down an answer…

LONG LIVE THE GP32

Dear games™

How come you've never covered the GP32 in the retro section? I know it doesn't have many good original games for it, but the emulation it can achieve is amazing. It's a really cool little machine that has a lot of neat features and is perfect if you want to play SNES or PC Engine games on the move.

Chris Butler, via email

We've actually had a GP32 for ages but haven't found the space to cover it in the Retro section. However, there are a few other machines on the way that look set to offer similar features to the GP32, so we'll probably do a round-up on them all in the not too distant future.



It's like the future meeting retro in the palm of your hand. Bet Arthur C. Clarke didn't see this one coming…

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BUYERS GUIDE QUICK REFERENCE

BUYERS GUIDE

It might be easy to play retro games through emulation, but there's nothing quite like owning the original system – that musty smell of ancient electronics can never really be replicated with a PC. Of course, there's always a price to pay and unscrupulous dealers are out to make a quick buck, but you really don't have to pay through the nose if you look in the right places. Charity shops, car boot sales and eBay are all good places to start, but before you do, use our guide to see how much you should be paying…

3DO

Panasonic 3DO	£60
Goldstar 3DO	£50-60

ACORN COMPUTERS

BBC Micro	£50
Acorn Electron	£40

AMSTRAD

Amstrad CPC 464	£20
Amstrad CPC 664	£20-25
Amstrad CPC 6128	£25
Amstrad GX4000	£50

ATARI

Atari VCS 2600	£30 (wooden models tend to cost more)
Atari ST	£40 (with software)
Atari Lynx	£15
Atari Jaguar	£20-30

COMMODORE

Commodore Vic 20	£15-20
Commodore 64	£25-35 (varies according to model)
Commodore Amiga	£35-40 (varies according to model)
Commodore CDTV	£50-60
C64GS	£50 (becoming more sought-after)
Commodore CD32	£35

MISC

GCE Vectrex (General Consumer Electronics)	£20-250
MB Vectrex (Milton Bradley)	£175-200
JAMMA compatible cabinets	£100-350 (depending on model)
Supergun	£150-200 (varies according to model)

NEC

PC Engine	£70-80
Turbo Grafx-16	£50-60
Turbo Duo	£115-220
PC Engine GT	£100-200
Super Grafx	£200-300

NINTENDO

Game & Watch	£15-50 (depending on title)
Nintendo Entertainment System	£15-20
Game Boy/Game Boy Pocket	£10
Game Boy Color	£15
Super Nintendo	£20-25
Virtual Boy	£75-100
Nintendo 64	£20-25

SEGA

Master System	£20
Mega Drive	£20-25
Game Gear	£10-25
Mega CD	£40-60
Sega 32X	£30
Sega Nomad	£75-150
Sega Saturn	£20-35
Dreamcast	£20-40

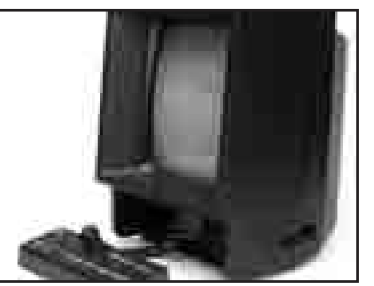
SINCLAIR

Sinclair ZX-81	£40
ZX Spectrum 48K	£40-50
ZX Spectrum +	£30
ZX Spectrum 128K	£40
ZX Spectrum +2	£35
ZX Spectrum +3	£40

SNK

Neo Geo MVS Single Slot (Arcade system)	£70 (prices for multi-slots are higher)
Neo Geo AES (home system)	£175-225
Neo Geo CD	£125-175
Neo Geo CDZ	£150-175
Neo Geo Pocket Color	£30-50

MACHINE OF THE MONTH



- **NAME:** Vectrex
- **PRICE:** £30-£280 with a game or two
- **THREE OF THE BEST:**
  Bedlam (est price £25)
  Fortress Of Narzod (est price £60)
  Minestorm (built into the machine)
- It might be increasingly expensive, but the Vectrex is a sexy piece of kit.

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Each item will be listed along with your region.

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Mail the following details to: gtm@paragon.co.uk ■ Your name ■ Your age (you must be over 18) ■ Your home address and telephone number (this will not be given out) ■ Your email address ■ The reference number for the item you want. Your email address will be passed to the seller, who will contact you to close the deal and arrange payment and delivery. This runs on a first come, first served basis.

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Searching for an elusive copy of Radiant Silvergun? Want to sell that pile of Spectrum games taking up space around the house? Then check out GTM, the most authentic retro sales column in the world.

FOR SALE – LOT 110
ATARI LYNX
With 13 games including *California Games, Rampage, Stun Runner, Road Blasters* and *Electro Cop*. Will sell for £70 or trade for Dreamcast titles.



FOR SALE

LOT 89 – Amiga 500 with 20 games including *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis, Stunt Car Racer, Zool* and *The Secret Of Monkey Island*. Comes with all relevant leads. Perfect for a beginner. £120. Southampton.

LOT 90 – Neo-Geo AES with two joysticks, a memory card and 11 games including *SNK Vs Capcom Chaos, Metal Slug 3* and *4, Fatal Fury Special* and *Alpha Mission* (games are English and Japanese, email for details). £1,000 ONO (will consider splitting). Shane at shamus1roks@yahoo.co.uk

LOT 92 – Chipped Japanese Dreamcast in clear case, with Japanese version of *Crazy Taxi, Psyvariar 2, House Of The Dead 2, Capcom Vs SNK, Cosmic Smash, Ikaruga, Powerstone, Street Fighter 3rd Strike* and *Giga Wing*. £180.

LOT 93 – Games: *Daytona USA* (Saturn, PAL), excellent condition, £2. *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* (Amiga, PAL), good condition, £1.50. *Zero Wing* (Mega Drive, PAL), good condition, £7. *Golden Axe 3* (Mega Drive, NTSC), excellent condition, £27. *Soukyugurentai* (Saturn, black cover, NTSC), excellent condition, £28. garethcrowley@hotmail.com

LOT 98 – PAL SNES with eight games including *Mario World, Uni Rally, Super Castlevania* and *Flashback*. All unboxed but in very good condition. £90. Aberdeen.

LOT 99 – *Harvest Moon 64* for N64. American version and in mint condition. £55. New Milton.

LOT 101 – PC Engine GT with eight games including *OutRun, Adventure Island, Gunhed* and *Jackie Chan Adventures*. Machine unboxed but in good condition. £200.

LOT 102 – *Wonder Boy III: The Dragon's Trap* for Master System. Great condition and with instructions. £12.

LOT 105 – *Mario Allstars* for PAL SNES. Boxed in great condition. £25.

Lot 107 – *Sega Rally* for the Saturn. This is easily one of the greatest racing games ever made and looks fantastic on the Saturn. This is the American NTSC version, but it is in superb condition. Yours for only £10. Crawley.

Lot 108 – Amstrad CPC 464 with green screen monitor and lots of games including *Run The Gauntlet, Combat School, Ikari Warriors, Bubble Bobble* and *Arkanoid*. £60 ONO. London.

Lot 109 – NES with seven games including *Super Mario Bros 3, The Legend Of Zelda, Solstice* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. All games unboxed but in decent condition. £50. Dublin.

WANTED

WANTED 35 – *King Of Fighters 2001* or *2002* for Neo Geo AES, boxed with manual. Good price paid. Derbyshire.

WANTED 36 – C64 and any games published by either Hewson or 21st Century Entertainment. Manchester.

WANTED 41 – Sega 32X. Must be in good working order. Will pay up to £40. Cambridgeshire.

WANTED 46 – *Metal Slug* for Neo-Geo AES. Will pay reasonable price if in good condition. Essex.

WANTED 47 – *Illbleed* for Sega Dreamcast. Any version, good price paid. Contact Andrew Hulme at ashulme1983@hotmail.com

WANTED 49 - *Sonic 1, 2* and *3*, and *Sonic & Knuckles*. Would prefer boxes and manuals. Will pay £5 each. iantennie@hotmail.com

WANTED 52 – *Jumping Flash 2* for PSone. Will pay up to £30 for copy in good condition. West Midlands.

WANTED 54 – Boxed copy of *Elemental Master* for Mega Drive, either Japanese or American. sambolland@yahoo.com

WANTED 55 – Atari ST joystick. Must be in reasonable condition.

WANTED 56 – Manuals for *Dragon Warrior Monsters* (GB), *Warhammer, Warhammer Dark Omen* (PS) and *Ecco The Dolphin* (MD). Linda@activemail.co.uk

WANTED 57 – *King Of Fighters '99* for Neo Geo AES. Must be boxed with instructions. Contact Steve at sambolland@yahoo.com

WANTED 58 – *Shining Force 3* (PAL Saturn). Can swap for *Nights: Into Dreams* + *Nights: Christmas Edition*. Call Thomas Davies, 01244 329996.

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Write your advertisement here, one word per box, and only include your name, address, phone number and/or email address below if you want them printed.

THE ULTIMATE COLLECTION

THIS MONTH'S COLLECTOR IS ROBERT HAZELBY – A DATABASE PROGRAMMER FROM BRISTOL WITH A LOVE OF ALL THINGS RETRO AND A PARTICULAR INTEREST IN ARCADE CABINETS. LOOK UPON HIS COLLECTION AND WEEP, PUNY MORTALS

Q) How long have you been collecting?

My addiction to retro collecting kicked off in the late Eighties. I was still using my Spectrum but as the machine was getting older, the games started to appear for mere pennies at car boot sales. For a schoolboy with only a pound or two pocket money this was a great way to build up an extensive collection.

Q) How did you get interested in collecting?

Although my Spectrum collecting started in the late Eighties, it wasn't until the early Nineties that I started picking up bits and pieces for other systems. I enjoy the thrill of rummaging around at car boot sales, and half the buzz comes from not knowing what you might find. Sure, most of the time you'll find cartridge after cartridge of *Sonic The Hedgehog* or yet another *FIFA* title, but every so often you'll find something which makes that early start on a Sunday morning worthwhile.

Q) What sources do you use and have you ever found a real bargain?

Years ago the car boot sale was my main source, but over the years I've built up a list of contacts and usually do business with them directly or through eBay. As for real bargains, a few years ago I picked up an Atari 2600 'Woody' complete with three joysticks, two paddles and about 25 games all for a fiver. I also bought my *OutRun* arcade machine from a group of poor students for a mere £250. The last one sold on eBay went for around £1,200!

Q) What's your most prized possession?

The Spectrum my father bought our family back in 1982 holds many fond memories for me as that not only got me into this craze in the first place, but also shaped what career I would get. However, I think I'd have to say it's either my *OutRun* deluxe upright or *Asteroids* cocktail table. Although neither machine is rare, the games have given me so much pleasure over the years.

Q) What's the most highly desirable item that you haven't found yet?

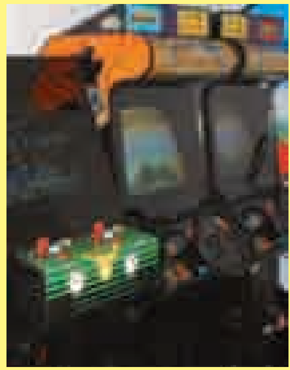
I'd really love to have a dedicated Konami *Pooyan* arcade machine, but from what information I can find on the internet these are as rare as rocking-horse shit. I've got my eye on one of those new Namco *Ms Pac-Man/Galaga* machines, but I may have to wait until they drop in price.

Q) How much is your collection worth?

I dread to think. One thing I do know is that I would have bought my own place a lot sooner if I'd not spent so much of my hard-earned cash on retro items.

Q) What does your family think of your collecting habit?

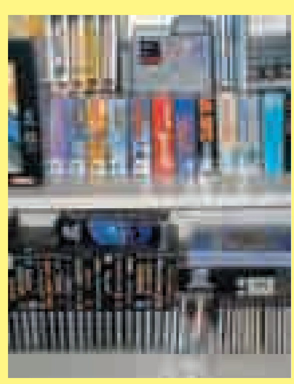
As I've got my place all to myself, I don't have anyone nagging me about what I can or can't bring into the house. However, when my parents visit they shake their heads and ask when I'm going to get rid of this 'junk'. They just don't understand.



Got your own arcade cabs? Didn't think so…

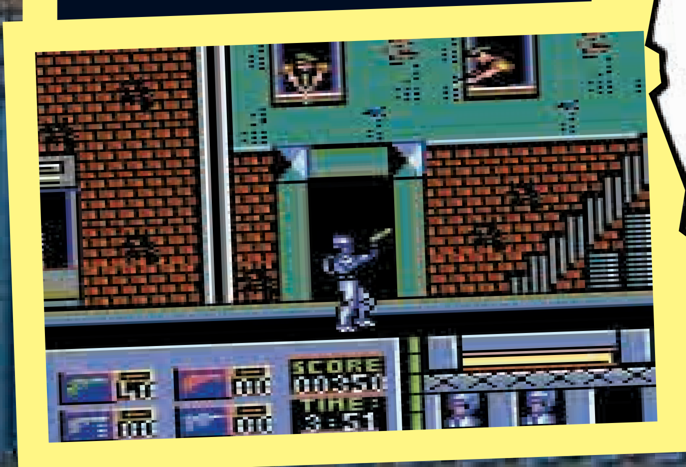


Ah, the steely gaze of an *OutRun* owner.



Action Replay? You're only cheating yourself…

NEXT MONTH IN RETRO



We take a look at the updated Sonic Collection Plus, dig out some more classic games and cover Nintendo's only hardware failure, the Virtual Boy.

See you then!

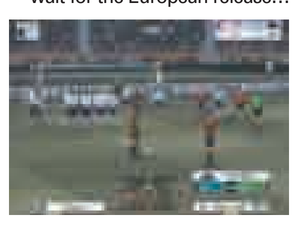
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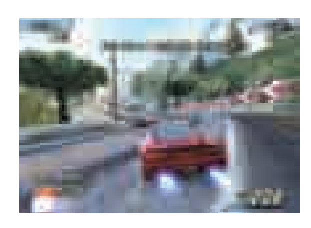
ESSENTIALS

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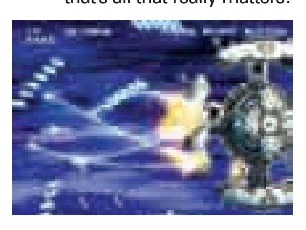
VIEWPOINT
WINNING ELEVEN 8
Listen up, sports fans – you have a new king. Sure, so it's not exactly a massive improvement on the last one, but bettering something that good can't exactly be an easy job. Just pray that you've got enough patience to wait for the European release…



VIEWPOINT
BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN
As the second game in the history of this magazine to score that all-elusive maximum score, it goes without saying that we quite like *Burnout 3*. Online, offline… it doesn't matter – Criterion's game has redefined arcade racing.



VIEWPOINT
GRADIUS V
Did we manage to anger a lot of people with our *Gradius* score last issue? Perhaps. Still, while the fifth instalment doesn't do as much to advance the series as we would have liked, there's no denying it's a great game. Surely that's all that really matters?



PLAYSTATION2

MANUFACTURER Sony **UK LAUNCH DATE** 24 November 2000 **MEDIA** 4.75-inch DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £104.99



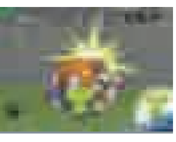
The oldest of the next-generation consoles, having had well over a year's head start over both the GameCube and Xbox. With support across the board from third-party developers, a built-in DVD player and backward compatibility with older PSone games, it's the most popular videogame console available today.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE PLAYSTATION2 GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
Amplitude	Sony	Harmonix	Music games have never needed as much skill as this
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	In-House	A fine example of adventuring; well worth the wait
Burnout 3: Takedown	EA Games	Criterion Studios	EA takes the arcade racing genre to new heights
Dark Chronicle	Sony	In-House	In-depth RPGs don't come much bigger than this
Devil May Cry	Capcom	In-House	The original is still the best by a long shot
Disgaea: Hour Of Darkness	Atlus	Nippon Ichi	Like your RPGs practically endless? Then this is for you
Grand Theft Auto: Double Pack	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North	The two games that pretty much put the PS2 where it is
Gregory Horror Show	Capcom	In-House	Bizarre, twisted and yet oh-so enjoyable
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	Io Interactive	Silent but deadly – a real killer of a game
Ico	SCEE	In-House	Possibly the most beautiful game ever made
Katamari Damashii IMPORT	Namco	In-House	One of the quirkiest action puzzle games around
NBA Street 2	Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG	The daddy of basketball games – no contest
Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time	Ubisoft	In-House	Ubisoft shows how to make a proper retro update
Rez	Sega	UGA	Deceptively simple – draws you in before you know it
Silent Hill 2	Konami	In-House	The high point of Konami's survival horror series
SSX 3	Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG	The *Tony Hawk* of the snowboarding world
Star Ocean: Till The End Of Time	Ubisoft	Square-Enix	Square proves that there's life beyond *Final Fantasy*
Tony Hawk's Underground	Activision	Neversoft	The defining moment in the *Tony Hawk* series
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution	Sega	In-House	Possibly the deepest 3D fighting game around today
Winning Eleven 8 IMPORT	Konami	In-House	The only football game worth owning, period.

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

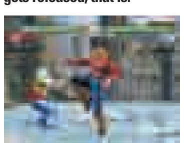
Katamari Damashii
With a US release just around the corner, soon everyone will get to enjoy tons of ball-rolling fun.



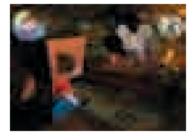
GTA: Double Pack
Just because *San Andreas* is almost upon us, that doesn't make the twin pack any less great.



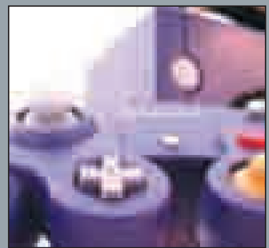
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution
The definitive version of Sega's long-running fighting master – until *Final Tuned*, gets released, that is.

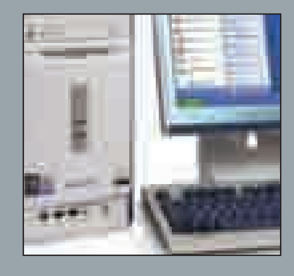


Gregory Horror Show
As strange as they come and twice as absorbing; collecting those stolen souls is both funny and scary.



Amplitude
Why Harmonix's rhythm action game hasn't seen more success, we don't know – it's totally brilliant.

XBOX

MANUFACTURER Microsoft **UK LAUNCH DATE** 13 March 2002 **MEDIA** 4.75-inch DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £99.99



Despite a slow start, the Xbox has swiftly become one of the major players in today's console market. Suggestions that the machine is only 'a PC in a box' are founded upon the built-in hard drive, broadband support and DVD player. However, the Xbox is far more accessible to gamers than most PCs.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE XBOX GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
Burnout 3: Takedown	EA Games	Criterion Studios	The game that Xbox Live was made for
Chronicles Of Riddick: Butcher Bay	Vivendi Universal	Starbreeze Studios	A fine example of great gameplay and top-notch graphics
Def Jam: Fight For New York	Electronic Arts	Aki Corporation	Ultra-violent fighting has never looked so good
Deus Ex: Invisible War	Eidos	Ion Storm	Freestyle adventuring with a decent first-person twist
Freedom Fighters	Electronic Arts	Io Interactive	Top-notch squad-based action with an arcade flavour
Grand Theft Auto: Double Pack	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North	The best versions of *GTA III* and *Vice City*, without a doubt
Halo	Microsoft	Bungie	The game that sold a million Xboxes
Jet Set Radio Future	Sega	Smilebit	Cel-shading at its very best and a soundtrack to die for
Knights Of The Old Republic	Activision	BioWare	One of the best *Star Wars* games ever made
Ninja Gaiden	Microsoft	Tecmo	Damn tough, but a great example of style and gameplay
OutRun 2	Sega	Sumo Digital	Stunning reproduction of a great arcade game
Panzer Dragoon Orta	Sega	In-House	The classic series continues in well-presented style
Project Gotham Racing 2	Microsoft	Bizarre Creations	As comprehensive an online racer as you're ever likely to find
Project Zero	Microsoft	Tecmo	Scarier than anything else out there today
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	In-House	An enjoyable and solid psychic blasting romp
Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow	Ubisoft	In-House	An essential update to the hugely popular Live game
Rallisport Challenge 2	Microsoft	Digital Illusions	Does everything you'd want from a rally game and more
Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft	In-House	Even better than the original, with a storming Live mode
Star Wars: Battlefront	Activision	Pandemic Studios	A great game first, a great Star Wars game second
Thief: Deadly Shadows	Eidos	Ion Storm	*Splinter Cell* for the Middle Ages? Sounds good to us…

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

Psi-Ops
Who'd have thought that Midway could have created such a storming game? We foresee great things here.



Chronicles Of Riddick
A little too short, but still one of the best FPS games to ever appear on the Xbox. Good job, Starbreeze.



Panzer Dragoon Orta
As far as treasured franchises go, Sega's dragon-based blaster is one that demands attention.



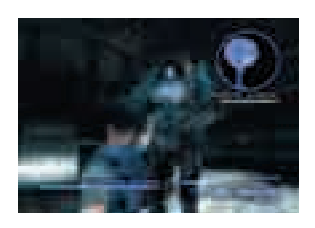
Project Gotham Racing 2
With *Burnout 3* now available, will Bizarre Creations' racer fall by the wayside? We hope not.



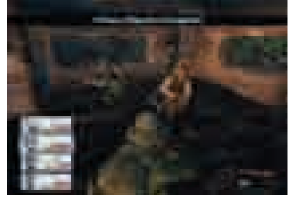
RS3: Black Arrow
As playable as it always was, but with more levels and extras. We just hope the online bugs get fixed.



VIEWPOINT
HEADHUNTER: REDEMPTION
The first game was sorely overlooked on the Dreamcast, so we've got our fingers crossed that Sega's sequel doesn't go the same way. A great storyline and some solid gameplay make this well worth playing through.



VIEWPOINT
CONFLICT: VIETNAM
Oh, how the mighty have fallen. We've got fond memories of the earlier *Desert Storm* games, which makes playing *Vietnam* all the more painful – without the need for strategy, it all falls apart. Believe us, we're disappointed. What went wrong, Pivotal?



VIEWPOINT
KINGDOM UNDER FIRE
From fairly standard PC title to an extremely impressive Xbox showing – you'd never think the two versions were meant to be related. Not only does it look superb, but the combination of strategy and action is second to none on the Xbox.

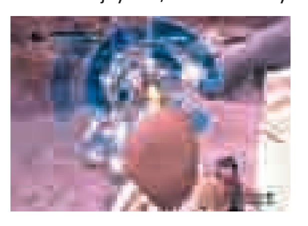


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VIEWPOINT
SECOND SIGHT

While Free Radical's mental adventure wasn't quite enough to overcome the quality of Midway's *Psi-Ops*, the game at least gets an uncontested run on the GameCube. Think *Splinter Cell* with psychic powers. It's enjoyable, if a little flimsy.



VIEWPOINT
TALES OF SYMPHONIA

Brace yourself – it's yet another extremely detailed and expansive RPG for you to plough through. With the average player taking around 60 hours to complete it (not including side-quests), you'll be playing this one to death when it arrives in the UK next month.



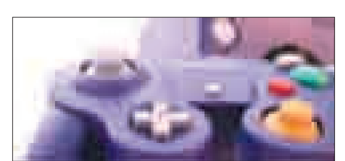
VIEWPOINT
WARIO WARE: MEGA PARTY GAME$

Now that the GameCube version of Nintendo's manic game bonanza has arrived, prepare for multiplayer madness. The mini-games might not have changed, but the addition of friends makes things all the more playable.



GAMECUBE

MANUFACTURER Nintendo **UK LAUNCH DATE** 3 May 2002 **MEDIA** 3-inch Optical Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £79.99



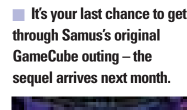
Though the GameCube seems destined to struggle, Nintendo's box of delights is still worth a look. While third-party support is dwindling, it's the first-party releases that really offer some quality gaming. Nintendo still makes some of the finest games ever, so missing out isn't really an option.

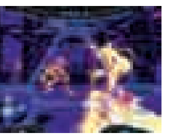
TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAMECUBE GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
Animal Crossing	Nintendo	In-House	The only game to keep us playing for a full year
Eternal Darkness	Nintendo	Silicon Knights	Scary in a different sense – very intriguing
F-Zero GX	Nintendo	Amusement Vision	Sega does it again with a brilliant retro remake
Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life	Ubisoft	Natsume	Highly absorbing – the *Animal Crossing* of farming games
Ikaruga	Treasure	In-House	Hard as nails and incredibly addictive
Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour	Nintendo	Camelot	Golfing fun without the need for Tiger Woods
Mario Kart: Double Dash!!	Nintendo	In-House	Another great moment in gaming from Nintendo
Mario Party 5	Nintendo	In-House	Mini-game goodness, whether alone or with friends
Metroid Prime	Nintendo	In-House	A genre-redefining title in every sense
Pikmin 2	Nintendo	In-House	More flowery fun for those of a patient disposition
Resident Evil	Capcom	In-House	Still as scary as it was when it first came out
Soul Calibur II	Namco	In-House	The leader of the pack when it comes to swordplay
Super Mario Sunshine	Nintendo	In-House	Not perfect, but still a very fine Mario adventure
Super Monkey Ball 2	Sega	Amusement Vision	Monkeys and balls – what more could you want?
Tales Of Symphonia IMPORT	Namco	In-House	An absolute beast of an RPG that will dominate your life
Viewtiful Joe	Capcom	In-House	Looks great, plays even better
Wario Ware: Mega Party Game$	Nintendo	In-House	A party game that'll have you rolling in the aisles
Winning Eleven 6 IMPORT	Konami	In-House	The only essential football game for the GameCube
Zelda: Four Swords Adventures IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House	The perfect excuse to have your friends round all the time
Zelda: The Wind Waker	Nintendo	In-House	One of the many reasons to own a GameCube

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

Zelda: The Wind Waker
If you think it's a kids' game, you're wrong. Apart from being too short, it's an amazing addition to the series.



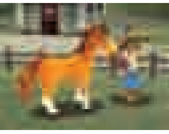


Metroid Prime
It's your last chance to get through Samus's original GameCube outing – the sequel arrives next month.

Animal Crossing
It's out in the UK now. If you're not losing most of your life to it, then you're missing out on greatness.

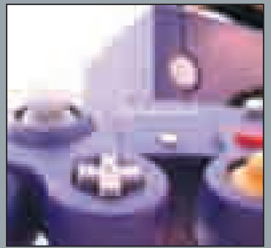


Harvest Moon
The only thing besides *Animal Crossing* to keep us playing for months on end; a pure delight of a game.



Zelda: Four Swords
Another great *Zelda* game that'll cause more than a few arguments between you and your gem-stealing friends.






GBA

MANUFACTURER Nintendo **UK LAUNCH DATE** 22 June 2001
MEDIA Flash Cartridge **CURRENT PRICE** £89.99



Ideal for gaming on the move, the GBA is a cheap and effective way of getting games to those who don't have time to sit down and play. The leaps in handheld technology mean that GBA games are now more accomplished and can even be compared favourably to their console-based cousins. The lovely SP model is available in a variety of colours.

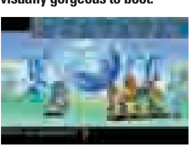
TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAME BOY ADVANCE GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer
Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising	Nintendo	In-House
Astro Boy: Omega Factor IMPORT	Sega	Treasure
Boktai: The Sun Is In Your Hand	Konami	In-House
Castlevania: Aria Of Sorrow	Konami	In-House
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	Nintendo	Square-Enix
Fire Emblem	Nintendo	In-House
Golden Sun: The Lost Age	Nintendo	Camelot
Harvest Moon: Friends Of Mineral Town	Ubisoft	Natsume
Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga	Nintendo	AlphaDream
Mario Golf: Advance Tour	Nintendo	Camelot
Mario Vs Donkey Kong IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House
Medal Of Honor: Infiltrator	Electronic Arts	In-House
Metroid: Zero Mission	Nintendo	In-House
Pokémon Pinball: Ruby And Sapphire	Nintendo	In-House
Pokémon Ruby / Sapphire	Nintendo	In-House
Shining Force: Resurrection Of The Dark Dragon	THQ	Sega
Street Fighter Alpha 3	Ubisoft	Crawfish
Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island	Nintendo	In-House
Wario Ware Inc: Mega Microgame$	Nintendo	In-House
Zelda: A Link To The Past/Four Swords	Nintendo	In-House

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN...

Golden Sun: The Lost Age

Handheld adventures don't come much more sprawling than this – tons to do and visually gorgeous to boot.



Pokémon Pinball

The pinball may look simple, but catching all those pesky Pokémon is far more challenging than you'd think.



Mario Golf: Advance Tour

Finally available in the UK, the handheld version of *Mario Golf* is every bit as enjoyable as its GameCube cousin.



PC

MANUFACTURER N/A **UK LAUNCH DATE** N/A
MEDIA 4.75-inch CD/DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £variable



While primarily bought as a work platform, the PC has swiftly become the haven of the more 'mature' gamer. With its natural ability for online and LAN play, it's perfectly tailored for the FPS, strategy and MMORPG genres. However, it can cost a fortune to keep a PC up to date and running fast enough to support flashy graphics.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE PC GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer
Battlefield Vietnam	EA	Digital Illusions
Call Of Duty	Activision	Infinity Ward
Championship Manager 03/04	Eidos	Sports Interactive
City Of Heroes	NCSoft	Cryptic Studios
Deus Ex	Eidos	Ion Storm
Far Cry	Ubisoft	Crytek
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North
Grim Fandango	LucasArts	In-House
Half-Life	Vivendi	Valve Software
Hidden & Dangerous 2	Gathering	Illusion
Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising	Novalogic	In-House
Medieval: Total War	Activision	Creative Assembly
Operation Flashpoint	Codemasters	In-House
Pro Evolution Soccer 3	Konami	In-House
Rise Of Nations	Microsoft	Big Huge Games
Sam & Max Hit The Road	Activision	LucasArts
Sensible World Of Soccer	Sensible Software	Renegade
The Sims	EA	Maxis
TRON 2.0	Buena Vista	Monolith
Unreal Tournament 2004	Atari	Epic Games

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN...

City Of Heroes

A hugely accessible and enjoyable MMORPG with added zing – though that may just be the lycra talking.



Pro Evolution Soccer 3

Until the release of the fourth game in a couple of months, this is the only outlet for your *PES* action.



Battlefield Vietnam

Pure action, with more than enough of that Vietnam atmosphere to go round. Pity it's only worth playing online.



PERIPHERALS

THEY MAY NOT BE EVERYONE'S CUP OF TEA, BUT EACH CONSOLE HAS ITS OWN MUST-HAVE PERIPHERALS – THOSE LITTLE EXTRAS THAT MAKE THE GAMING EXPERIENCE ALL THE MORE PLEASURABLE. CAN YOU KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THEM?

ZM-RS6F 5.1 HEADPHONES

Console: N/A
From: Zalman
Price: £44.99
Available: Now

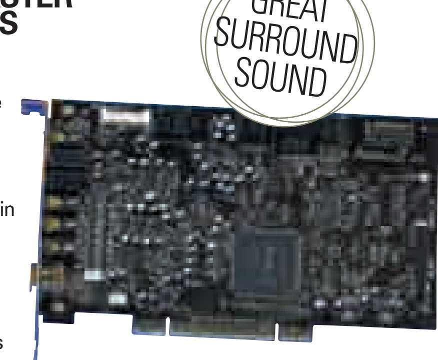


Surround sound systems are great if you're looking to immerse yourself in a game, but setting one up perfectly can be a lot more hassle than it's worth. Say, for example, the location of your PC doesn't suit having speakers at both the front and the rear, or you want 5.1 sound but need to keep things quiet… what then? In either case, the answer is likely to be headphones much like the ones made by Zalman; specifically, its ZM-RS6F 5.1 surround sound headphones. Featuring six individual speakers (three within each earpiece) and comfortable soundproof padding, the headphones offer all the benefits of 5.1 surround sound from either your PC, DVD player or consoles (providing you've got a suitable 5.1 sound card or amplifier to connect them to, of course). Just plug them in and you're away.

SOUNDBLASTER AUDIGY 2 ZS

GREAT SURROUND SOUND

Console: PC
From: Creative
Price: £79.99
Available: Now



Creative's expertise in the field of sound technology is well known, so it's no surprise that the company's products are always at the top of the tree when it comes to quality. Hence the reason why when it comes to PC sound cards, the most recent creation from Creative – the Audigy 2 ZS – is among the best products for those looking to get the most out of their games' soundtracks. The ZS can deliver surround sound up to 7.1 quality (making it the ideal match for Creative's Inspire T7700 speakers, covered last issue), as well as being completely compatible with THX, Dolby Digital and DTS and coming with its own EAX audio enhancement technology, allowing for volume equalisation, time scaling and cross fading. From atmospheric gaming and DVD playback to music creation and management, the ZS can handle it. A real bargain.

T900 GT GAMING PC

Console: N/A
From: Armari
Price: From £1,995
Available: Now

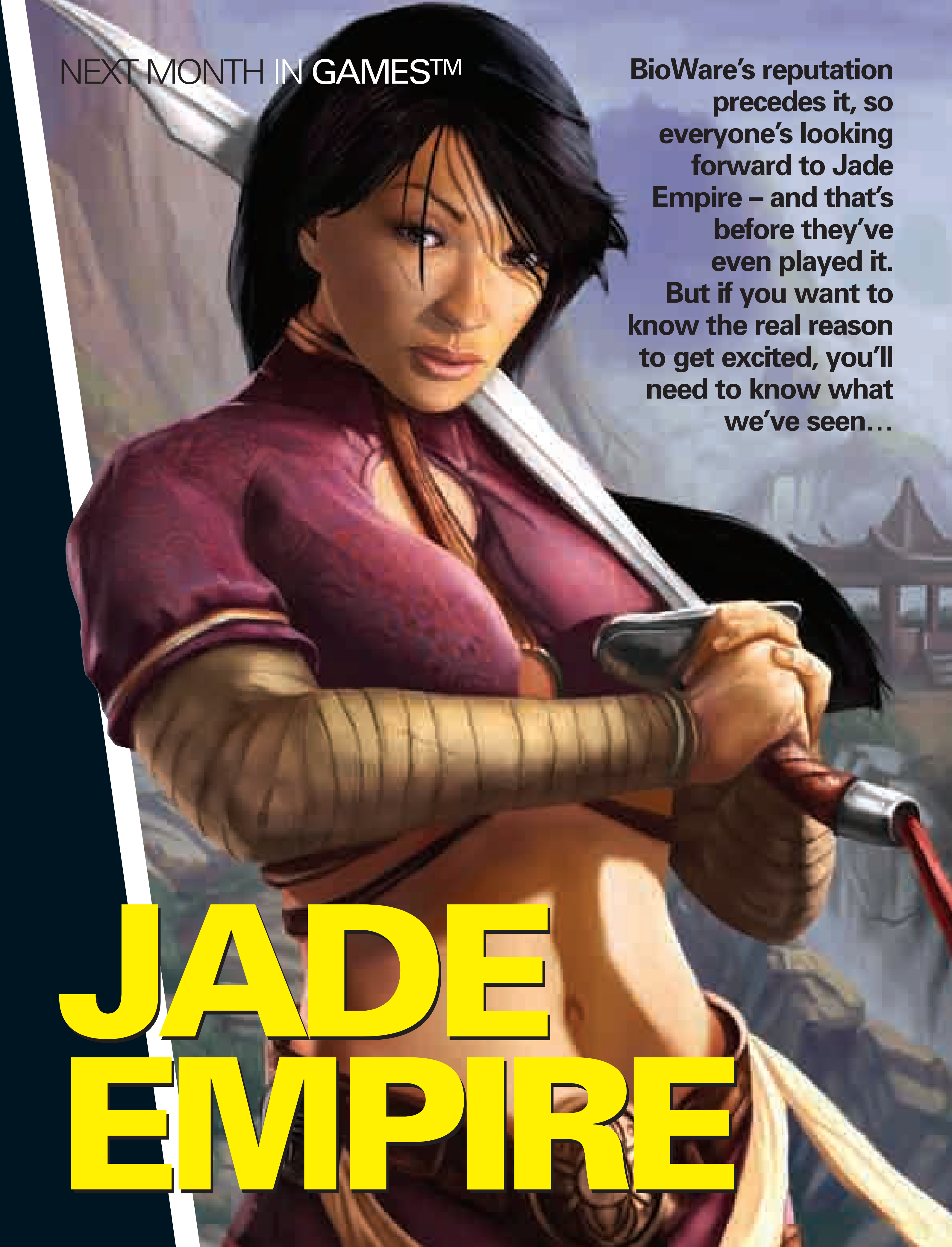


SUPERB GAMING KIT

A high-spec PC created to satisfy the most demanding games player might not count as a 'peripheral'. However, we can't resist bringing you the latest offering from Armari, because it's amazed us. When a hardware manufacturer known for high-end workstations and server machines begins making specialist gaming PCs, you know you're going to get something special. Indeed, 'special' would be the word we'd use to describe the T900-GT, with 'stacked' coming a close second. It's hard not to be impressed with the machine from the moment you take it out of the box and see its black aluminium CoolerMaster Wavemaster case. Designed with efficiency in mind, the case is permanently cold to the touch and combines with the built-in Super Low Noise PSU to keep the machine's innards cool and quiet. And things are even better on the inside…

Between the 3.6GHz Pentium 4 processor, the 1Gb of SDRAM, the nVidia NX6800 GT 256Mb graphics card running through the latest high-speed PCI Express connections and the two Hitachi hard drives totalling 320Gb of storage space, the machine simply flies – it pushed *Painkiller* to the limits and even handled *Doom 3*'s Ultra Performance settings without breaking a sweat. Not only that, but the package also includes Creative's Audigy 2 ZS 7.1 sound card (see above) and matching surround sound speakers, a dual-layer dual-format DVD recorder, an in-built seven-in-one USB 2.0 micro drive that can read a variety of digital flash cards, and a Logitech keyboard and optical mouse. For the quality and price, it's almost unbeatable. Check out www.armari.com for more details.


eMag


NEXT MONTH IN GAMES™
BioWare's reputation precedes it, so everyone's looking forward to Jade Empire – and that's before they've even played it. But if you want to know the real reason to get excited, you'll need to know what we've seen…
JADE EMPIRE

NEXT MONTH

MORE… PREVIEWS

All eyes might on what's out to buy, but we're already looking ahead – with the likes of *Battlefield: Modern Combat*, *TimeSplitters: Future Perfect*, *Pariah*, *EverQuest II* and *The Getaway: Black Monday* all coming soon, how can you not be as excited as we are?

MORE… REVIEWS

Finally, the lion's share of the games you'll be playing this Christmas go under the **games**™ review microscope. From the dead cert that is *GTA: San Andreas* to other highlights such as *Metroid Prime 2*, *THUG 2*, *Rome: Total War*, *Zelda: The Minish Cap* and *Killzone*, they'll all be ripe for the grilling.

MORE… FEATURES

games™ says 'Hello Tokyo' and flies halfway around the world to visit this year's Tokyo Game Show; is granted an audience with Nippon Ichi – the incredibly complex minds responsible for *Disgaea*; talks arcades with the companies determined to bring the industry back to full health; and gets an exclusive interview with the creators of the new *Final Fantasy* movie. Oh, and did we mention we were going to Tokyo?

180 PAGES OF KUNG-FU GAMING ENLIGHTENMENT

ON SALE 4 NOVEMBER

Please note: Due to circumstances beyond even our control, we can't guarantee that the next issue will actually contain all these things. But it will definitely have *something* in it. Probably words. And some pictures.

CONTACT

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF gamesTM

Enough of what we think – this is where you get to show off your rapier wit to praise, criticise or mock the games industry

Making Contact

There are many wonderful ways to get in touch with games™. The traditional postal method is perfectly acceptable using the address below:

games™, Highbury Entertainment, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, BH1 2JS

However, there are quicker ways to reach us thanks to the technological marvel that is the internet. Email us at this address: **gamestm@paragon.co.uk**

Alternatively, why not get yourself on our dedicated forum? Here you should be shielded from multiple spams and infantile remarks. Access to the site has been password protected and only those of you who read **games™** will be able to get onto the site – and if you have bought this magazine then you're not the sort to be abusive and childish, are you? Follow these quick steps to getting on the **games™** forum and enjoy hassle-free chatting with those of us who share a passion for gaming.

Step One:
Get yourself online. It's fairly simple, so we're sure you'll think of something.

Step Two:
Type the following into the browser window: **www.totalgames.net**
You will arrive at the Totalgames website. From here click on the 'forum' icon. News users will have to register via the 'new user' icon – it's a simple step-by-step process which we're sure you can manage.

Step Three:
Once registered, simply email **gamestm@paragon.co.uk** with the password '**takedown**' and your username. Then a whole world of sophisticated wit and games chat will be yours. It says here.

GREETINGS FROM ONE of your mature readers. Yes, I'm on the brink of becoming one of those 'old people zombies' you described in issue 22 – shuffling about, moaning and clutching a copy of Retro in hands ruined by years of joystick bashing. One thing that hasn't changed in the last 20-odd years, however, is letters pages. People still carp about the price of software, self-righteous twits sermonise from their moral high ground and the piracy debate rages uselessly on.

I've never bought a pirate game. The ones I saw were always shabby, lacked documentation and often didn't work. Much better to pay for the legitimate kit, get technical support and sell it or trade it in after playing. Which brings me neatly to my next subject…

Keza MacDonald (Contact, issue 22) warns of the 'evil' of pre-owned games, the sale of which 'denies the developer its deserved profits' and 'feeds an immoral corporation'. Following that logic we should close down second-hand bookshops. Are they not denying the publishers their profits and robbing the author of royalties? And how about second-hand music stores? Come to think of it, why don't we just hound charity shops off our high streets? They sell books, music *and* videos.

Keza compounds her folly by claiming that 'pre-owned PC games don't exist'. Well, in just about every Gamestation store I've visited they do! Perhaps Keza will discover this when spending the £100 of vouchers you, in your infinite wisdom, decided to award.
Ian (old git) Garbutt

gamesTM: Disregarding the fact that there are a couple of 'ancients' on the team, we like hearing from fellow decrepit gamers having a good moan about the youth of today. You do make several good points so we think you should have a nice sit down and wait for Meals on Wheels to pop round. As for Keza's vouchers, don't forget that Gamestation sells new games, or is your memory going?

I WAS LEAFING through a recent copy of your magazine, scanning the release lists, and I was amazed how many games were 'wanted'. It then became apparent that Christmas was on the way. But there is no way many of your readers are going to be able to splash out on five or six 'essential' games in such a short amount of time. Even if I did have the money, I haven't got the time to play all of them thoroughly.

But why do games companies put us in this predicament every year? It comes down to greed. Look at the likes of *GTA: San Andreas* – it's going to do well regardless of its release date, the same goes for *Pro Evo 4* and for *Halo 2* (which has been delayed for two years but still comes round just in time for Christmas). They don't need Christmas to increase their sales, so why leave it to the end of the year to release them, when I haven't got the money to buy them? If they released some quality titles a few months after the leeching holiday, I'd be able to buy all these triple-A titles at their full price, and I'm sure games companies would rather I did this too.

Because of this greed there will always be casualties of war (*Prince Of Persia*, anyone?). I'm quite interested in *Need For Speed Underground 2* and *Juiced* but because of the close release dates I will only buy one. If the releases were suitably staggered I could afford the time and money for both these titles. Do

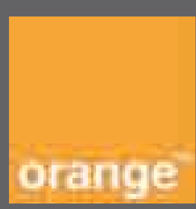
"THE **VIEW OF THE GAMES INDUSTRY** IS THAT IT DOESN'T MATTER **HOW LONG YOU'VE STUDIED FOR,** HOW MUCH PASSION YOU HAVE OR HOW CAPABLE YOU ARE, **WE DON'T WANT YOU**"



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they really need to release them all at Christmas? Surely games companies know it's easier to get money from people in small amounts throughout the year rather than one lump sum.
Lewis Patrick

games™: The 'wanted' games on our release list are by no means essential purchases – they're just games we're really looking forward to playing or seeing more of. They're not an indication of what you must go out and buy – if you hate Pokémon why buy *Leaf Green* because we want it? As for the Christmas games glut, the industry has a captive audience of people buying presents or being given money or gift vouchers. Yes, some titles will lose out, but at the time of year when non-gamers are buying games, publishers know a decent marketing campaign means non-gamers will ask for the titles they've heard of.

THE LAST FEW issues of your magazine have featured industry insiders bemoaning the fact that software piracy is on the increase, and while this is a cause for concern, there seems to be very little insight within the industry as to the causes of piracy, let alone any way to solve the problem.

I think, first of all, it is necessary to identify why piracy is so prolific. The digital age has allowed people with no particular skills to perfectly copy any item of software – be it a game, a movie or an album – and to infinitely replicate that copy at zero cost. To date, the industry's response has been to invest more and more time and money in extravagant anti-piracy measures such as CD keys, disc authentication and online verification – money which is completely wasted as approximately 30 seconds after *Doom 3* had been released it had been cracked and uploaded to the internet.

This leaves even the most law-abiding gamer with a not particularly difficult choice. Do they spend £30-40 on a new release, or do they download it for free?

It seems to me that this simple premise has been completely overlooked by the industry, perhaps understandably so – after all, how can an industry hope to compete with a competitor offering products for free?

The first steps in combating piracy have to come from within the software industry itself. It needs to look at its business models and make them more competitive and more effective. In this age of widespread broadband internet access, is it really acceptable to publish games on CD or DVDs, with all the associated packaging and store mark-ups? Surely a more sensible approach would be to use an online distribution model, cutting out a variety of middlemen, helping to keep costs down.

The industry also needs to realise that it has itself to blame for piracy – it creates products that people find desirable, but prices them in such a way as to make them worthwhile targets of piracy. If a new game was priced between £5-10, how many people would bother to pirate a copy?

Piracy seriously damages the software industry, stunts creativity and innovation, and ultimately harms gamers – and the only body in a position to do anything about it is the software industry. If it is not prepared to accept the causes of piracy, and to act in such a way that makes piracy unattractive, then I believe that it is doomed to endless sequels, escalating prices and the ultimate demise of gaming.
Martin Hughes

games™: Right then, the gauntlet's down. Is there anyone in the industry who'd like to respond?

I SEE THAT games™ now has ads for games industry jobs. While most would be overjoyed at such a thing, I bothered to read them and I have come to the conclusion that they are completely pointless and worthless. Let me paraphrase them into plain English so the average reader can understand them:

'Wanted! Games designer/artist/musician/ programmer/executive. Must be under 25 with



CONTACT

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF games™

Enough of what we think, this is where you lot get to show off your rapier wit to praise, criticise or mock the games industry

Text Life

Am i right in saying that it costs £1,999.00 in memory cards 4 the ps2 to match the storage space that comes free with the xbox?
games™: Probably. We're not too good at maths.

Is there any chance that SEGA will do the right thing with what could b the greasest retro release possible. Of course I mean Streets of Rage. Any format please.
games™: What's wrong with the Mega Drive version then, eh?

Completed Ico 4 the 1st time. Took about 6 hours. Is that any good? Ur absolutely right about it.All people should play it. So unique!
games™: We hate to say we told you so but, well, we love being right.

Have you ever noticed how many games are coming out for gamecube not many and as a proud owner of a gc I am disappointed by games designers who have cut making games for gc personally I think they should get their finger out because I see gc as a very respectable console what do you think?
games™: Here, you dropped these: ? , . , .

Did u no 1 of the images u used 4 the kh2 priview was 4 the gba game?
games™: Of course we did. It was a preview for both games – you did read the text, didn't you?

Do you remember Pugsy on the Mega drive? Was the first game I ever played. I loved it. Could you do a review of Pugsy in Retro?
games™: Maybe. But only because we like you.

Why did Nintendo drop Tetra's Trackers from the western versions of Zelda 4 Swords?
games™: The name recognition software wouldn't have been easy to translate into English. Or so Nintendo said, anyway.

Does no one in vice city lock their car?
games™: That were always the way when we were young. It was fields round here, you know…

"THE INDUSTRY HAS ITSELF TO BLAME FOR PIRACY – IT CREATES DESIRABLE PRODUCTS BUT PRICES THEM SO THEY'RE UNATTAINABLE"

a minimum of 10 years' experience in the games industry. Must have worked on at least 5 triple-A titles that have achieved critical acclaim and high sales. Anyone else, especially fresh graduates, get lost.'

Well, isn't that nice? A dozen two-bit upstart companies, who might as well call themselves Bob's Scratch+Sniff Games, want to hire Mr Kojima, Carmack and Minter at the same time. I mention those names since they are probably the only people actually capable of meeting the requested criteria. The bottom line from the games industry is that it doesn't matter how many degrees you have, how long you've studied for, how much passion you have, how much you know or how capable you are, *we don't want you*. It's effectively saying 'screw you' to anyone wanting to break into the industry, even if they have the potential to become the next Miyamoto.

You print regular pessimistic letters from readers disenchanted with the industry. Are you surprised? The whole thing has become bloated and insular. Clearly it's not a case of new blood not being available, but rather they do not want new blood. Quite why anyone who has several years' experience, as well as big-selling titles under their belt, would want to leave their current corporation and join another is beyond me. Do any of these ads even get answered? Does anyone gain employment from them? They're just recycling people that are already in the industry!

Why this goes on I can't understand, but if the industry doesn't want another global crash to make the one of '83 look like a cakewalk, then it had better open its doors and let some bloody fresh talent into its secure and unreachable innards, lest they wither and rot.

Meanwhile, since the industry is happy to say 'screw you' to all those wanting to break in, I'll say the exact same right back. All of them can go bankrupt for all I care, maybe then companies will learn their lessons.
John Szczepaniak

games™: Of course job ads will always ask for the best people – no company is realistically going to advertise for 'someone who really, really likes games but has never used any programming software and has no practical experience'. It's much the same in journalism. You invariably can't get a job without experience, but getting that experience is tough. If you really want that

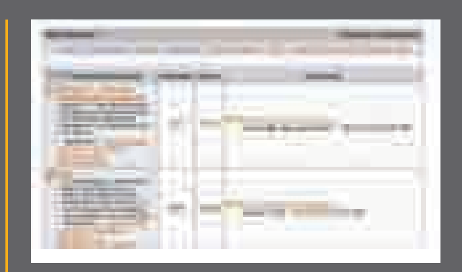


Getting into the games industry isn't quite as simple as you'd think, but that doesn't mean it's impossible.



Will the era of the local arcade ever return? We hope so – if only so we've got somewhere to lose all our spare change.





FROM THE FORUM

IT'S YOU, A PALM TREE, SOME SAND… AND ONE GAME

LETTER OF THE MONTH

I HATE MY PS2. Of all the gaming platforms ever conceived I believe it to be the only one to qualify as arrogant. It stands there next to my (Sony) TV, towering over my other consoles like an emperor of modern electronics. It mocks the other systems with its ridiculous popularity, even though it requires a Multitap for anything more than hate-fuelled grudge matches.

Its memory cards cost the best part of £20 but it doesn't care because it's a PlayStation® and the kids just love PlayStation®. PlayStation means cool and casual gaming without being geeky or 'hardcore'. PlayStation means mainstream.

But it means 2,000 awful, half-finished games where each is more glitch-packed than the last. It means painful loading times and a pathetic controller. And it also means some of the finest titles ever created. *TimeSplitters, Rez, Ico, GTA, Gran Turismo, Metal Gear Solid*… the list goes on and on. It means a chance for new talent just breaking into the industry on the most popular machine available.

And as much as I despise this traffic warden of a console, it stands as the most important to the evolution of the industry. Its path, unfortunately, seems to be the only way forward.

But with Sammy's money behind it I shall look on at Sega, knelt and with hands tightly clasped together praying for another dream machine.

Luke Goldspink

games™: See? Every cloud, and all that. Or do we mean every silver lining? Yes, PS2's monopoly of the market isn't great, but then its not like the console is completely devoid of decent games. Have £100 to buy some, er, decent games.



If you'd like to line your pockets with £100 of Gamestation vouchers then send us a games-related letter crammed with sparkling wit and pertinent points. Extra marks will be awarded for neat handwriting. Marks will be deducted for moaning about Nintendo.

industry job (though why you'd want to work in a business that you seem to despise is a mystery) you'll have to keep knocking on doors, sending off CVs, getting qualifications, knocking on doors… you get the picture.

AS SOMEONE WHO grew up in arcades and who wishes they were still as prevalent as they once were, I simply had to tell you about an arcade that has opened up quite close to me in Larne, Northern Ireland. It's spacious, the machines are all in superb condition, it's suitably dark, the sound is turned up nice and loud, and it really is excellent to see that something like this has just opened in what is quite a small town.

Admittedly, there are some machines missing I would have liked to have seen (*Ridge Racer, OutRun* and a few others), but I was mightily impressed with what was there. And not a fag burn in sight.

Anyway, the games are: *Scud Race, Hyper Bishi Bashi Championship, Star Wars Arcade, Time Crisis 3, Crisis Zone, Silent Scope 2, House Of The Dead 3, Tsurugi, 18 Wheeler, Virtua Tennis 2, Virtua Striker 2002, Manx TT, Battle Gear 3, Initial D, Sega Rally 2, Ring Riders, Dancing Stage Euromix, Pool Pocket Fortunes* and *The Lost World*.

I may live there like a weird gaming hobo.

Mark Patience

games™: Nice to see a mix of new(ish) and old games there. We're always interested to hear of arcades such as this being set up so that our readers can make the odd pilgrimage.

Dastardly
If you were stranded on an island and could have only one game to play for the next, er, five years, which one on what platform and why? Please spare me the 'but what would you plug it into?' ****, you pedantic goons.

dangerboyjim
Do you go for something arcadey that you can spend years perfecting, like *Soul Calibur* (the DC version)? Or do you go for something massive with a lot of replay value? Good old *Final Fantasy XII*. Or do you go for something like *Project Gotham Racing 2*? The online features mean you could call for help, and while you're waiting you've got a game that takes ages to complete, and you can always go for those internet high scores… I think *Soul Calibur*, because I can play that for months.

Hong Kong Phooey
I really don't think I could choose one. I mean, I love *Mr Driller*, but could I play it for five years ? I would probably have to plonk for a PC game, maybe *Civ 2*. A game that I know has hours and hours of playability – reading the manual alone would take me at least a year.

CBx4
It would have to be an RPG, purely because they destroy your life. I'm playing *Tales Of Symphonia* at the mo' so I'll go for that as it's bloody massive.

Adam_G
Maybe *Skies Of Arcadia* on the Dreamcast. Maybe then I'll get the game bloody finished.

Folkestonia
Sims 2 because then I could pretend that I wasn't on my own. I'd end up speaking Simish, though, and once rescued people would think I'd gone odd.

Genji-Gloves
As much as I would miss having a good 2D fighter, it would have to be *Disgaea: Hour Of Darkness*. Tons of replay and so many characters – you could play from now till the end of time… or until you're eaten by sharks.

Octavius
I suppose it'd be a choice between *Tetris, Civ3, Mario Kart* (any variation, I'm not fussy) or *GTA: Vice City*. Though my favourite game is probably *FFVII*, I just can't imagine wanting to play it constantly for five years.

Ryan
Just for sheer size and the chance that it could well take five years to complete I would opt for *Morrowind* but as it can get boring as hell perhaps *Pro Evo 3* or a game where you can always complete against your high scores would be better, like *Mario Kart* or *Track & Field*.